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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

folio

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University to anchor national transplant program

Federal health minister launches campaign to increase donations

By Richard Cairney and Ryan Smith

Janet Hutton doesn't know the exact numbers, but she's one of nearly 4,000 Canadians awaiting an organ transplant. The former restaurant manager has been waiting for a kidney transplant for two years. So for three days of the week, for 3-1/2 hours, Hutton lays in a bed at the University of Alberta Hospital to undergo kidney dialysis.

"It's like you're married to this machine," Hutton says of the dialysis unit. "You can't go away for a few days, you have to watch what you eat—I take 29 pills every day. Your whole life revolves around dialysis."

Her very life depends on being chained to that machine—but only for so long. Last year, 147 Canadians died while waiting for organ transplants.

So Hutton, and patients like her across the country, were pleased last week when federal Health Minister Allan Rock announced a national plan to help increase and co-ordinate organ and tissue donations in Canada. With an organ donation rate of just 14 per million persons, Canada's organ donor record is "one of the lowest rates in the industrialized world," Rock said. The federal government plans to correct that, using elements of a successful model used in Spain, where the donation rate is 21 per million.

"We need more heroes, we need more organ and tissue donors to save lives, and with this plan we hope we're on our way to achieving that," Rock said announcing plans to set up the Canadian Council for Donation and Transplantation.

The council will be headquartered in Edmonton, in recognition of the outstanding record in organ and tissue transplantation at the University of Alberta Hospital. Although council members weren't named, it is expected the U of A



Janet Hutton undergoes kidney dialysis at the University of Alberta Hospital. Awaiting a kidney transplant, Hutton is encouraged by the formation of a new national transplant council.

will provide significant leadership.

Joined by provincial Health Minister Gary Mar and federal Justice Minister Ann McLellan, Rock noted Alberta hospitals, particularly those in Edmonton, lead the country in transplantation surgeries, and Albertans are leaders the country in organ and tissue donations. The U of A is also a leading medical research and technology centre.

Dr. Edmond Ryan, a U of A professor of endocrinology and a member of the University of Alberta's islet-cell diabetes

treatment team, said there are currently more than 700 people who have applied

to receive islet-cell transplants, but only 15 people have received the treatment so far. "We simply don't have enough donors at this time," he said.

As impressed as he is with Rock's plan—which includes raising awareness of the need for organ and tissue donors, formalizing standards, co-ordinating a national secretariat and providing \$20 million in funding

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—Janet Hutton

over five years—Ryan isn't declaring it a victory.

"How much of a success it is, well, we'll have to wait and see," he said. "It's certainly worth a shot."

For her part, Hutton, 46, realizes other plans to increase organ donation have come and gone. "You kind of wonder if this next thing is going to be any different," she said. "But it's still a good idea."

She says the key to making the program work is public education. And she says patients like her have a role to play. Presently, donor forms on Alberta Health cards should be filled out by people who wish to donate organs. Capital Health Authority spokesperson Steve Buick adds it is important to make your wishes known.

"You need to be sure the people who will be making the decision on your behalf are very clear on what you want," he said. "Families under the stress of coping with the death of a loved one are not in the best position to make that decision without your guidance."

Before falling ill, Hutton "never really thought about" donating her own organs. "I didn't think about it because it was never in my face, in the media. I never thought about it until I got sick."

Any program to encourage organ donations needs to shatter a cultural aversion to it. "The general public needs to know what it means for a recipient to become a recipient—to have that organ. They need to know what life is like before you get the kidney, and then what it's like after you get the kidney."

And what would Hutton's life be like if she received a new kidney?

"Oh, I'd go back to work," she said, smiling. "And I'd go on vacation, and I'd eat again. It would be amazing. It would be absolutely amazing." ■

FSJ opens new centre for Canadian studies

Creation of a full-blown centre was next logical step

By Geoff McMaster



Faculté Saint-Jean Dean Claudette Tardif

When she returned to work after a sabbatical recently, Faculté Saint-Jean Dean Claudette Tardif wanted to start things off on a high note. So she inaugurated the faculty's new Centre D'Études Canadiennes, along with the help of Canada's commissioner of official languages, Dyane Adam.

While the Canadian studies program in the arts faculty is now on the chopping block, the new centre demonstrates that, at Faculté, the interdisciplinary study of Canada continues to grow, says Tardif. In addition to administering the faculty's BA in Canadian studies, the centre will promote interdisciplinary research within the faculty, and oversee the recently created Louis Desrochers Professorship in Canadian Studies.

It will also encourage research on topics such as the formation of identities in an increasingly multicultural culture, Francophone culture in the West and political and economic relations within the context of federalism.

"This is not a new interest for us," said Tardif. "The Faculté Saint-Jean has had a Canadian studies program for the last 15 years. Many students are interested in pursuing studies in that program and many of our professors have a passion for that study."

"Here at FSJ we could play a very important role in bringing the French-speaking perspective as well as English-speaking perspective to Canada, but from a federalist point of view."

She says Faculté Saint-Jean by its very

nature as a bilingual school promoting Francophone culture in Western Canada needs to be both multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary. "We have to work very closely together. What a focus like Canadian studies does is it draws together the interests of many professors—teaching and research interests...Often in our faculty we only have one or two professors per discipline. It makes it difficult to get that depth unless you have a common focal point."

The construction of the new centre is part of an \$8-million project, funded both federally and provincially, to build a new residence and renovate the old one, the faculty's first building. The official opening of both buildings will take place May 24.

Within the centre will also be the new Institute for Western Canadian Francophone Heritage, or L'Institut pour le Patrimoine de la Francophonie de L'Ouest Canadien, which will house a rich collection of heritage archives and encourage people within the larger community to contribute by exploring their cultural roots.

"A number of people in the community are interested in their history," says the centre's new director, Dr. Claude Couture. "They do studies on the genealogy of their families—we're trying to get very close to

the community without giving up our main goal of academic research."

Couture says the centre will study Canada from the broadest possible perspective, incorporating history, political science, sociology, literature, linguistics, and even education.

While the program will be run in French, he says, "all of our students are at least bilingual if not multilingual, so we will promote exchanges in other languages...We think it's important to have at least a bilingual approach to the study of Canada." He adds the centre will also try to recruit students from native communities, inviting them, for example, to study native languages.

Some of the interdisciplinary research already underway at the faculty includes a project in political science and economics to study family structures across the Canadian landscape, and one combining philosophy and education to examine schooling and ethnic identity formation.

Tardif said the faculty has applied for an MA program in Canadian Studies, which will begin next year if approved. She also hopes to establish linkages with some of the 17 or 18 universities in France that also have Canadian studies centres. ■

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Lab runs smoothly thanks to technician

Annual award recognizes excellent work

By Richard Cairney

If you can learn about a person by looking at their desk, then Renate Meuser's work space has a lot to say. The sheer volume of photographs of smiling kids posted on the wall lets you know the children aren't all hers. They are family snapshots taken by students who keep Meuser up to date on their progress in the molecular biology and biotechnology centre and at home.

"Yeah, I guess I'm everybody's grandmother here or something," Meuser said, modestly. That may be the way some people see her, but besides being a friend, her job is to run the molecular biology and biotechnology centre. The Faculty of Agriculture, Forestry and Home Economics' facility is spread out along the basement floor of the Agriculture/Forestry Centre, where students conduct laboratory work. The facility itself is impressive, capable of handling radioactive materials and offering students a cold lab—literally a lab built into a walk-in freezer—for experiments requiring lower temperatures.

"We're very proud of this," she said. If

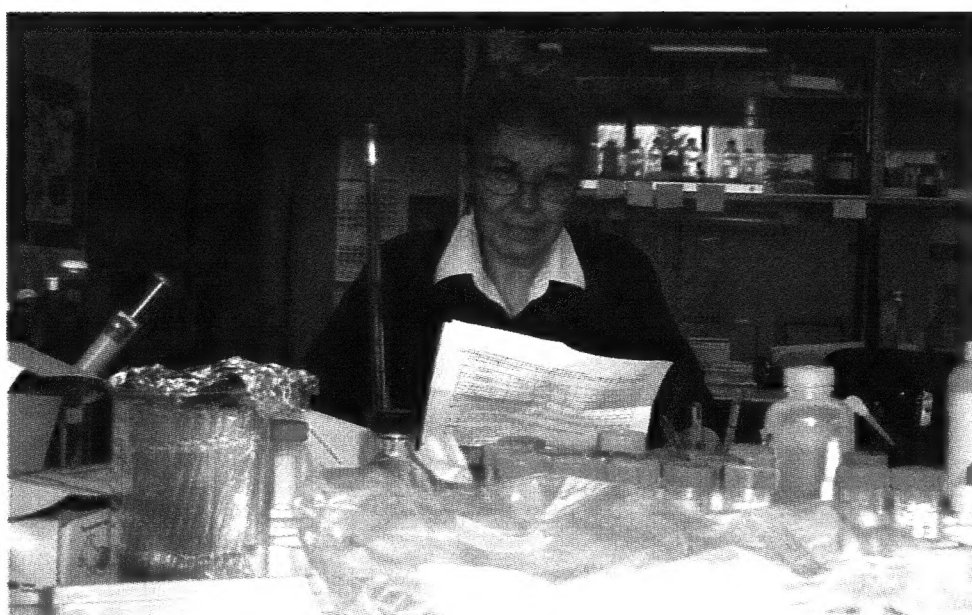
Meuser gives you a tour and you get the impression it belongs to her, there's no mistake. She knows every inch of the space, every piece of equipment and what every student is doing. It's no small task.

"There are times of the year here when it is really quiet and times when it's so crowded you don't know where to step," she said.

Meuser's job is to help students run their experiments in the most efficient, and effective manner possible. "I've been around a long time, and I've seen people struggle to develop a protocol that already exists," she said. "My job is to prevent people from spending months and months trying to reinvent the wheel. The most rewarding part of the job is when someone comes in with a project there hasn't been a protocol developed

"My job is to prevent people from spending months and months trying to reinvent the wheel. The most rewarding part of the job is when someone comes in with a project there hasn't been a protocol developed for—once in a while you come across something that hasn't been established yet and you just sit down and work something out together."

—Renate Meuser



Renate Meuser has been named the University of Alberta's Outstanding Technician of the Year.

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and you just sit down and work something out together."

Meuser was educated in Germany and moved to the US during the late 1960s, seeing social upheaval on university campuses. "You never knew what was going to happen," she said of her time at the University of Madison, where the National Guard was called to keep student protesters in line.

"I think she found Canada a more peaceful place," said Walter Dixon, a professor in

the department of agricultural, food and nutritional sciences. Dixon says Meuser is so highly regarded that a former U of A researcher who moved to the US invited the technician along. "That is pretty unusual for a tech to be taken with a

researcher," he said. "She is very well respected."

Dixon adds that Meuser is also appreciated for her personal qualities. "She sort of has the kind of role in the centre where she has become the grandmother for some of the students," he said. "She has a very warm side, and a lot of students like that. She shrugs it off, but I think she is quietly delighted."

She's similarly thrilled about receiving the Technician of the Year Award. "A lot of people did a lot of work for this," she said of the nomination procedure. "I'm really happy that people appreciate what I've done. It was nice of them to think of it." ■

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For your eyes only?

A landmark decision grants students access to letters of reference

By Richard Cairney

A ruling by Alberta's information and privacy commissioner that removes confidential status from reference letters written for students is getting mixed reviews from faculty and students. Until the March 28 decision was handed down, letters of reference written for students by professors could not be viewed by students. That promise of confidentiality allowed professors and student supervisors the opportunity to address a student's capabilities and shortcomings in a straightforward manner, unfettered by the possibility that students themselves would be reading over their shoulder.

The reference letters are of significant influence on a student's academic career—applicants to graduate courses are often required to include letters of reference to the school they are applying to. Not all units within the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research require reference letters but the U of A's department of anthropology does. A student who recently applied for a graduate student position in the department was turned down, and she subsequently applied for and won the right to view her letters of reference after Bob Clark, the province's information and privacy commissioner, removed the traditional guarantee of confidentiality. For or against, reaction has been strong.

"We've had people say 'I guess we'll have to stop writing reference letters and other people who say they can live with the decision but they'll have to change the way they operate,'" said Gordon Unger, the university's access to information and privacy advisor.

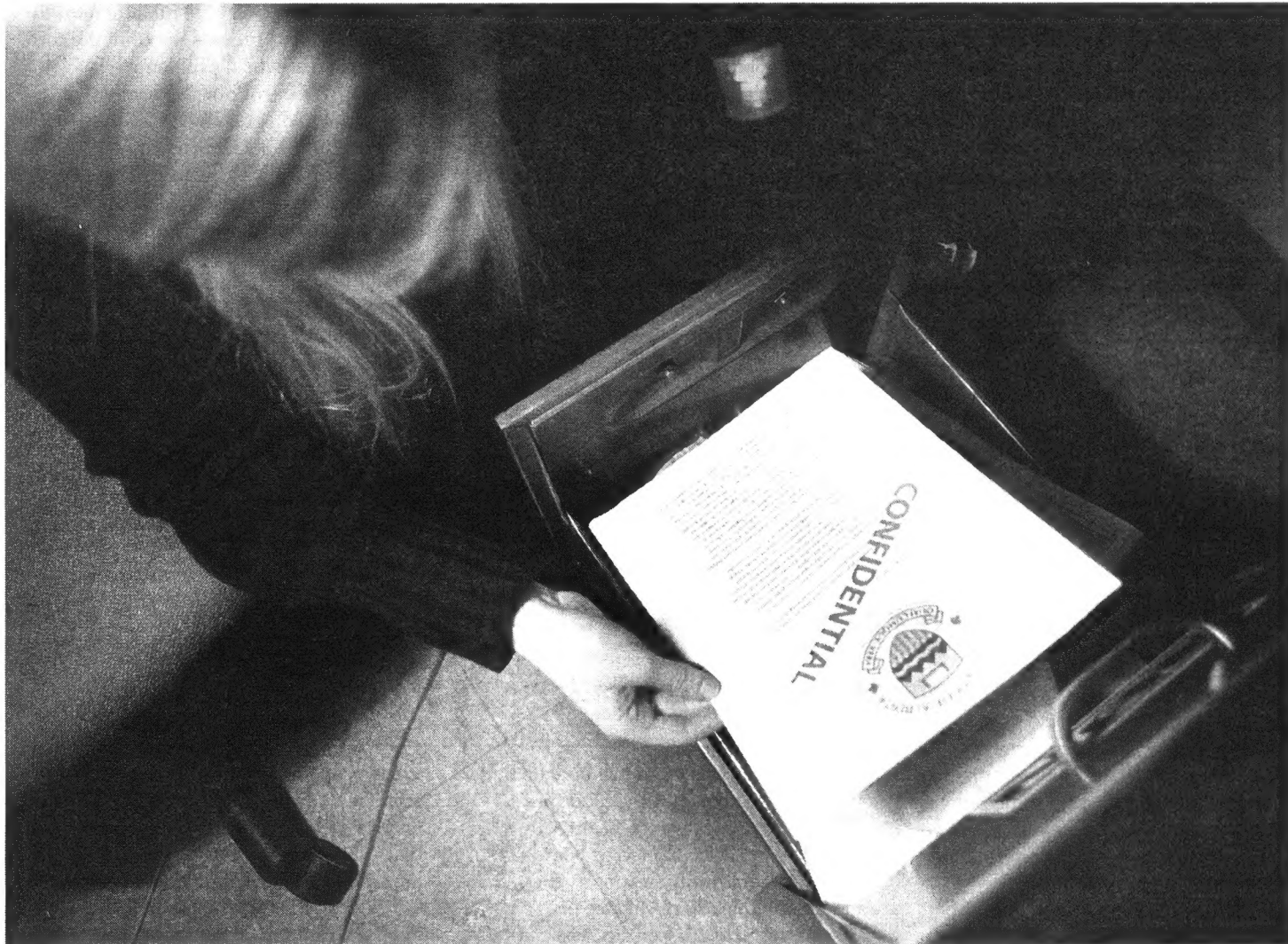
That means some professors and student supervisors feel they may be less forthcoming in writing reference letters. "When you want to talk honestly about personal relationships, if you are speaking about a personal relationship in the presence of a student you will choose your words more carefully," said Unger. "That doesn't mean the words you choose in private situations are either false or necessarily coloured, but you will change the nature of the way you write."

Mark Dale, dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, has heard some professors say they won't write references any more, a position he describes as "extreme." Dale expects a more moderate outcome: that reference letters may no longer hold the cache they once had. "I don't know what the outcome will be, but the concern is that letters of reference may be written in a much more guarded fashion now," he said. "A letter of reference may need to be interpreted not so much by what it says but by what it leaves out."

That's a sad state of affairs, as far as Graduate Students' Association President Shannon McEwen is concerned. She believes people should be more straightforward in their dealings. If a professor or student supervisor feels unable to provide a good reference letter, they should be honest with the student in question.

"I would never be willing to write something about someone that I wouldn't be willing to say to their face," McEwen said. "If I don't feel I am able to give someone the best reference possible I'd suggest they look for someone else."

In some cases, supervisors are required to write reference letters, whether the contents would be flattering or not. Under



A cloak of secrecy surrounding letters of reference for students has been lifted.

such awkward circumstances, McEwen says, she'd be honest with the student. "If I had to write that letter anyway, I'd tell the student what I was going to put in it."

It just isn't fair, McEwen says, to prevent students from reading letters that are, after all, about them.

Associate Vice President (Academic) Anne Marie Decore says the ruling could cause significant changes. Some faculties and departments could move to a strict "check-list" format to provide references.

"Some programs may decide to do without references altogether," she said.

In some cases, that might not be a bad thing, she adds. Decore said she has read reference letters "that were so brief as to be uninformative," and of no use to the student in question.

"You have to look at this two ways: sometimes referees don't write very good letters of reference not because the student isn't good but because...the letter writer couldn't or wouldn't take the time to do justice to the student," she said.

"It is possible that students aren't always well served by their referees. A perfectly deserving student may get a reference that isn't very good not because it says anything bad but because it doesn't say much at all. So in a sense there is something to be said from the students'

point of view."

Students' Union President Leslie Church knows students need to be careful about whom they seek references from.

"If I got a four in your class, I'm not going to ask you for a reference," she said.

But Church also understands the benefits of confidentiality. "From a student's point of view it is good to have the freedom to see that information, but certainly I can understand the university's position because it does impede their ability to provide a confidential and frank assessment," she said.

Church wonders if a student's ability to review reference letters could come back to haunt professors who wrote them. Church wonders if it's possible now for a student to take legal action against a professor or supervisor who they feel didn't provide an adequate or accurate reference.

"If a professor is to provide you with what they consider an accurate reference and you don't get admitted, or whatever you are applying for, and you look at their reference letters and that shows they can be held responsible...I think that needs some clarity," she said. "If you find someone hasn't given you a very good reference does that put the professor at risk? That is the concern that is out there, I think."

Church is right. The 3,000-member

"When you want to talk honestly about personal relationships, if you are speaking about a personal relationship in the presence of a student you will choose your words more carefully. That doesn't mean the words you choose in private situations are either false or necessarily coloured but you will change the nature of the way you write."

—Gordon Unger, access to information and privacy advisor

Association of Academic Staff at the U of A responded to the ruling by asking university administrators to consider an appeal of the decision. During a meeting following the ruling, the association's members discussed the matter "at length," said association president Jeanette Buckingham. The decision applies not only to letters written by U of A faculty regarding U of A students, but also to letters of reference supplied for grad school applicants from all over the world. So association members are also worried about what value to place on letters of reference for students applying to enter programs at the U of A.

"Several people did express concern, mostly with a sense of what this meant for their grad programs and their ability to be forthcoming, or for other people to be forthcoming about people who are coming into their grad programs," said Buckingham.

For his part, Unger says the university is, in fact, considering a court appeal of the privacy commissioner's ruling. And regardless of the outcome of that case, the university will still review each case individually to ensure the privacy of faculty and students is protected.

In the meantime, Buckingham says faculty members appear to have lost a degree of faith in reference letters.

"People who are aware of the openness of this correspondence will now read that letter of reference accordingly. You read letters of reference in a different way knowing those letters are open to everyone, and people will naturally fall back on either telephone calls or personal conversations rather than relying on the letters." ■

message from the • president

Success follows creativity

Faculty's job is to create the best learning environment possible

by Dr. Rod Fraser

Latin etymology tells us the word 'education' comes from the roots *educare*, meaning "out of," and *ducare*, "to lead or draw." Thus, "education" means "to draw out of." And this is how we at the University of Alberta see our teaching role. We are not to simply fill the minds of our students as though they are sausage skins, but instead must draw out from within the potential of our students' minds.

Undoubtedly, the discussion of "learning how to learn" ends up being a discussion of the attributes of an outstanding teacher. Great teachers have the ability to excite one's curiosity about a subject, and are often instrumental in triggering a student's capacity to learn. In doing so, they tap into a student's reservoir of potential, unleashing their creativity and inherent talents. This unleashing is another in the series of outcomes we wish to foster in the

undergraduate education of every University of Alberta student.

Clearly, those with the greatest success in this area have an infectious ability to inspire students to look beyond their books and notes for answers. They are also among the most likely to have a sharp-witted answer to the question, "what does it take to excite a student's curiosity about a subject?"

Erhan Erkut, 3M Teaching Fellow from the Faculty of Business, says the best facilitators are buy-in and frustration. His introductory sessions involve discussions of familiar cases, leaving absolutely no doubt as to the relevance of the problem. With this buy-in, he leaves students to generate ideas and approaches on their own. Realizing they do not possess the processes or skills to handle the case leads to a great deal of frustration, which Erkut says,

"creates the most fertile environment for learning as they will give full attention to the material and process it within the context of the real-world problem."

Rudy Wiebe, of our Department of English, would agree. In his address to the Congress of the Social Sciences and Humanities last May, he said "urgency focuses, drives the creative." It is up to our faculty to create that sense of urgency, using whatever techniques can be invented. In other words, our faculty also needs to unleash their own creative potential in order to stimulate the inherent talents of students.

Dr. Wiebe tells an amusing story of his encounter with a university president in Germany who was convinced there could be no schooling for creative writing. When Wiebe pressed him for an answer on how Germans became writers,

he responded "Genie!"

Of course, there are those rare few people who have natural, or perhaps, divine inspiration. But, for the majority of our students, their creativity is much like a muscle that needs to be flexed. As Dr. Wiebe explains, "the more exercise, the more you are likely to be able to lift."

We hear over and over again from the students who speak at the variety of campus teaching awards ceremonies, that the professors who truly motivate them are the ones who are able to infect a class with their passion for the material. It's a lifestyle that speaks louder than words, though. If students realize that an instructor genuinely cares about course material, they become curious about what lies beyond what they see in class. As Dr. Erkut has said, "they want the same substance that intoxicates you." ■



Grant to improve grass-roots health care

Study will examine which strategies work best for patients

By Richard Cairney

A University of Alberta professor has secured a \$200,000 grant to help investigate different ways community members can influence the programs provided by community health centres.

"This is going to allow community health centres to get a clearer picture of what they are all doing in terms of citizen participation," said Dr. John Church, a professor of health policy management in the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry.

Church's research, funded by the Social Science and Research Council of Canada, will examine the roles citizens play in community health centres in five provinces: Alberta, B.C., Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario.

In conducting the study, Church and his co-investigators, including former U of A Dean of Medicine Dr. Doug Wilson, will examine the differences between community health centres that answer to community-

elected boards and those that operate under the rule of regional health authorities.

The difference is significant, Church says. The presence of elected boards is so critical to community responsiveness that, in fact, the Canadian Alliance of Community Health Centres Association won't offer membership to centres governed by politically-appointed boards. In Edmonton, that means the inner-city Boyle-McCauley Health Centre, which reports to an elected board, may operate differently than the North East Health Centre in Clareview, which is run by the Capital Region Health Authority.

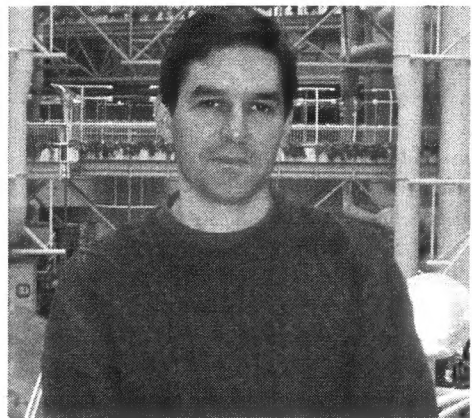
"We want to look at the way citizens and administrators and health providers interact when making decisions about health services delivery," said Church. "In Boyle-McCauley, the community may identify some sort of a need, such as a needle exchange program, and they would then go

to the board and request some sort of program be delivered and presumably the board would work with the administration—they would all be working together to come up with a solution to a problem."

That's probably the way things work in other community health centres. But there are probably many variations between community health centres operating under different governing structures, and those operating between community health centres in different provinces, Church says.

"We expect we are going to see quite a bit of diversity...community health centres operating under regional health authorities have difficulty making the argument that they do in fact have good engagement with citizens...My own feeling is that having elected boards is only one mechanism to involve the community."

Ultimately, the goal is to help commu-



Dr. John Church will study the ways community health centres operate.

nity health centres serve their neighbourhoods more effectively. "This provides opportunities for lots of learning for all of the partners," Church said. "One centre might be able to learn a lot from what others are doing." ■

How are we doing—really?

Business professor says there's more to life than money

By Terese Brasen

Dr. Alice Nakamura wants to develop national economic indicators that look at more than money, because, she says, "money isn't everything."

To help her find new ways to define and measure economic productivity, Nakamura has received \$413,600 in Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) funding. Over the next three years, Nakamura will work with a research team that includes Statistics Canada, KPMG Consulting, Dr. Peter Tiessen from the School of Business and Dr. Dallas Cullen, who holds joint appointments with business and women's studies.

The University of Alberta School of Business professor and author of several books uses the example of a couple going through a divorce to explain why she wants to create new measures of economic productivity. "They have lawyers and real estate people to sell their old homes and

buy new ones. The money transacted goes up, but the welfare in that household probably went down."

The most infamous productivity measure is the Gross Domestic Product or GDP. Other measures are Statistics Canada's labour productivity and multifactor productivity measures. All three focus on money alone and ignore social and cultural indicators that tell us how well our country is really doing.

Lobby groups in the US and Canada have been railing against strict economic measures for some time. "There are efforts being made in Canada and internationally to create broader measures of well-being and society that would include social and environmental indicators, in combination with traditional economic indicators," says Mark Anielski, director of green economics for the Pembina Institute, which recently released a study describing 50 indicators

of economic, social and environmental well-being and identifies social and environmental costs that are contributing to Alberta's GDP growth.

While groups like the Pembina Institute, federal agencies, management consulting firms like KPMG and the U of A business faculty may some day look at economic activity through the same lens, Nakamura resists developing an aggregate general progress indicator. Instead, her project will develop a family of measures.

Developing an index begins with a family of individual indicators or measures. The next step isn't simple arithmetic, merely adding the measures and finding an average. Individual indicators are weighted, some receiving more value than others.

Nakamura said individual groups can develop weighted indexes. But nationally we need a family of measures that can give a more accurate picture of how well

Canada is doing.

"There is no way of my adding the indicator for pollution to an indicator for crime to an indicator for child death rate," said Nakamura, explaining that the way we produce the GDP index is that absurd.

At first glance, a family of indicators might look more complex. However, a family of indicators would tell us more about the country and the economy and what we can do to improve it. "Each one has very different solutions and measures. If you know you have a water quality problem, then you know that it is very different from a problem with domestic violence or drug abuse."

SSHRC is an independent federal government agency that funds university-based research. Nakamura's project is part of Rethinking Productivity, a SSHRC initiative that aims to encourage new thinking to solve old problems. ■

Protesting against globalism takes courage

Given the alternative, it's the best thing we can do

By Gordon Laxer

This week, several hundred Albertans are trekking to Quebec City by any means available—train, bus, car and even by air, over 4,000 kilometres away. If it weren't for a little thing called 'final exams' hundreds more would join them. They will link with tens of thousands from the rest of Canada and 33 other countries in the Western Hemisphere.

What draws them to Quebec City: a French immersion exchange, a lark? No. They are willing to put their bodies on the line, to risk pepper spray and arrest in a city fenced off by barbed wire and 6,000 police, because they are fighting for a cause—the environment, the poor in Latin America, the sovereignty of Canadians, and even the right to peacefully walk the streets.

The corporate and political elites portray the FTAA, or Free Trade Area of the Americas, as a benign agreement to protect democracy, enhance prosperity, even for the poor, and remove barriers to the benefits of 'globalization.' All such agreements are portrayed this way. Remember 'Free Trade' with the US in 1989, with its promised 'guaranteed access' to the American market and more and better-paying jobs? Instead we got four years of decline in full-time jobs in Canada between 1990 and 1995, falling real incomes and unlimited US corporate rights to our resources. If Canada got free trade, why can the US still keep out our lumber, potatoes and steel?

If the FTAA is not about free trade, what is it about? It's about giving foreign corporations enormous rights to profit at the expense of democracy. Taking the strongest corporate-rule clauses from the failed Multilateral Agreement on Investment [MAI] 1998, the failed Seattle talks at the World Trade Organisation in 1999 and the current talks at the General Agreement on Trade in Services, the nego-

tiators for the FTAA are secretly discussing plans for a new corporate order in the Western Hemisphere. If implemented, the FTAA would give foreign corporations free access to public services—such as health care, education and municipal services, as well as unrestricted access to the countries' resource heritage and commons—including the right to pollute their air and export their water.

We know the effects on Canadian sovereignty of giving foreign corporations the right to directly sue governments. Under Chapter 11 of NAFTA, Canada had to overturn its ban on the importation of MMT, a gasoline additive the Canadian government termed a 'dangerous neurotoxin' and pay the Ethyl corporation of America \$19 million in compensation. Many more chapter 11 cases are pending.

The central issue in Quebec City is 'globalism' an ideology of corporate domination, not 'globalization' a vague term first used consistently by the American Banker journal. Globalization is the preferred term of the economic and political elites, because it conveys the sense of an inevitable direction of history. Anyone trying to oppose it is portrayed as a member of the flat Earth society.

But, far from being flat Earthers, the people going to the alternative summit represent the most sophisticated generation of consumers ever. They see through the false advertising of the global elites and are re-discovering something they had lost—their citizenship. They know citizen-based democracy can be enhanced by international agreements that make corporations serve people, rather than the other way round.

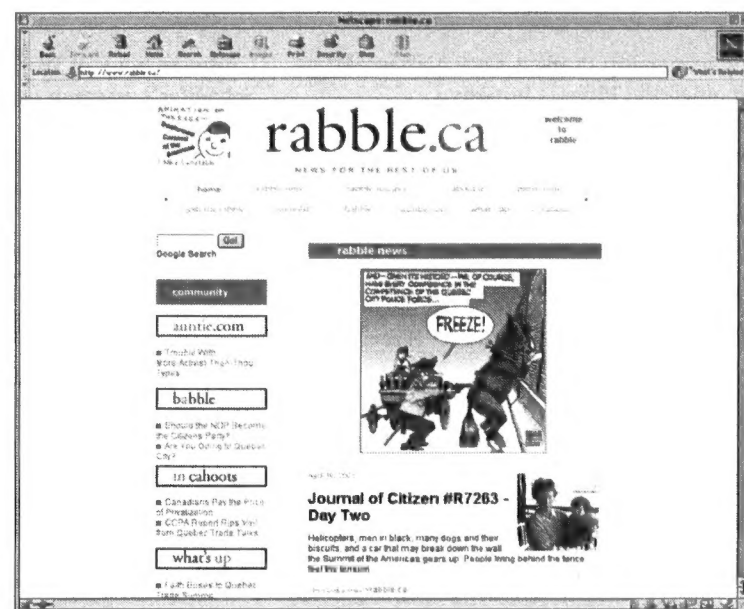
Let's sneak behind the barbed wire and the bought tables to hear what the elites will say to each other. I turn to docu-

mented evidence of what they said at previous elite gatherings. Henry Kissinger, that consummate globe-trotting elitist, said in Dublin in 1999: "Globalisation is a new word for 'America's dominant role in the world.'"

You would have thought that Lawrence Summers, Bill Clinton's Secretary of the Treasury, was rehearsing for the Quebec City Summit when he said, in 1996, that anyone who is critical of the "globalist Washington Consensus" is a "separatist." But no, Summers was referring to all those, even outside la belle province, who support national sovereignty over their own resources, environment, economy and culture. Our "ideology, capitalism, is in ascendance everywhere," Summers contended. "Globalist economic policy ... is the forward defence of America's deepest security interest." So much for the freedom of other countries to try a different path.

But the best table to be at, would be with a world banker like David Rockefeller. Thinking his remarks would not leak out beyond the barbed wire, Rockefeller, President and CEO of Citibank, told fellow elitists at the 1991 annual Bilderberger Conference:

"We are grateful to the Washington



Protesters in Quebec aren't merely rabble, they are sophisticated consumers.

Post, The New York Times, Time Magazine and other great publications whose directors have attended our meetings and respected their promises of discretion for almost 40 years. It would have been impossible for us to develop our plan for the world if we had been subjected to the lights of publicity during those years ... The supranational sovereignty of an intellectual elite and world bankers is surely preferable to the national autodetermination practiced in past centuries."

If you want to know why thousands have the courage to protest in the face of a scary police presence in Quebec City, Rockefeller's vision of a New World order, run by an intellectual elite and world bankers, gives you the answer.

(Gordon Laxer is the Director of the Parkland Institute and Principal Investigator in the five-year, \$1.8 million, SSHRC-funded Globalism and its Challengers Project.) ■

folio letters to the editor

Study of all things Canadian will thrive even without Canadian Studies

It is clear from the letter by Nancy Semple Heule published in the April 6 *Folio*, that the Canadian Studies issue is not well understood even within the university community. Specifically, it seems to be widely believed that eliminating the Canadian Studies program means that there will be no more courses that have Canada as their focus. Nothing could be further from the truth. Canadian history, for example, has been taught continuously here since before the First World War and enrolments in Canadian courses have, in the last three decades, generally constituted between 30 and 40 per cent of totals for the department. Running quickly through the list of full-time staff in the Faculty of Arts I was easily able to identify 40 or so scholars exclusive of the Canadian Studies

Program whose principal research and teaching interests are Canada. There are many others in Law, Education, Native Studies, Physical Education and Recreation and undoubtedly elsewhere.

It would probably be possible to put all these people together into one giant department and call it Canadian Studies, but it would be completely unmanageable. It would also be intellectually deadening by removing scholars from direct contact with the newest developments in their respective disciplines. The problem is not that there is 'not much money in Canadian Studies,' a phrase which I take to mean demand for courses in this area. The problem is that a disproportionate percentage of the budget of the Faculty of Arts has been devoted to one kind of Canadian

course at the expense of others. There is, for example, great demand for courses in Canadian literature, Canadian society and Canadian history offered by English, Sociology and History and Classics. Most people in these areas teach very large classes that often have lengthy waiting lists to get in. On the other hand there is very little apparent demand for courses offered as Canadian Studies, this in spite of the fact that the Canadian Studies program here has had, and continues to have, outstanding teachers and scholars. In times of falling budgets it makes more sense to devote our limited resources to the kind of Canadian content that students want.

Rod Macleod
History and Classics

folio letters to the editor

Folio welcomes letters to the editor. Send your thoughts and opinions via e-mail to richard.cairney@ualberta.ca, fax at 492-2997, or by mail to Folio, Office of Public Affairs, 400 Athabasca Hall, Edmonton, Alberta T6G 2E8. Letters may be edited for grammar, style, accuracy and length.

\$2.5 million for artificial intelligence, nanotechnology

The field of tiny things will have an enormous impact on our lives

By Phoebe Dey

A world-class lab used to study "tiny things" and a facility for games-related artificial intelligence research are being launched at the University of Alberta, thanks to a \$5 million award from iCORE, a program funded by the provincial government.

Dr. Jonathan Schaeffer has been named chair of the iCORE High Performance Artificial Intelligence Systems Laboratory, while Drs. Michael Brett and Mark Freeman are senior research fellows sharing leadership of the iCORE Nanoscale Engineering Physics Initiative.

"I can say without hesitation that these two teams are among the best research teams in the world," iCORE President Brian Unger said during a campus luncheon to announce the projects. "Information and communications technology is transforming the way we live, work and play...and the way we conduct research. The mandate of iCORE is to attract and grow a critical mass of researchers, and that's what we are doing today."

iCORE has awarded Schaeffer, a U of A computing science professor, \$500,000 per year for five years for a total of \$2.5 million—about half of the total budget for the lab.

Schaeffer is considered a world authority in artificial intelligence applied to computer games. In 1994, he developed Chinook, the first computer program to win a human world championship in any game, an accomplishment noted in the Guinness Book of World Records. Schaeffer's research now applies across several fields.

"Some of the major players in the human genome project are using our tools," said Schaeffer. "We study things like sequencing, and one example is the Rubik's Cube. The technology you need to solve the Rubik's Cube is the same technology you need to solve the DNA mystery. So when people ask why I'm playing with this 'game,' it's much more than that."

The ideas developed in Schaeffer's lab

will apply to areas such as computational biology, commercial products for research and the burgeoning interactive entertainment industry.

Brett, a U of A engineering professor, and Freeman, from the physics department, have teamed up to lead a research group studying nanotechnology—research in which the objects of study are smaller than a micron. Their work will provide the building blocks for continued improvements in the density and speed of data storage and will have applications in fields including photonics, magnetic storage and optics.

"There really is a revolution happening on a nanoscale," said Freeman, who has been internationally recognized for his work on state-of-the-art imaging of magnetic phenomena in the solid state. "This lab will allow us to go in and manipulate matter. You can imagine the incredible things that lie in store."

"This field of tiny things is going to improve our lives more in the next 25



Dr. Jonathan Schaeffer, chair of the iCORE High Performance Artificial Intelligence Systems Laboratory, uses a Rubik's Cube to illustrate applications his research has in everything from health to entertainment.

years than computers have in the past 25 years," said Brett, whose team will also receive \$2.5 million over the next five years. "This field will do things like improve our health, and we want to be players on the scene. With this lab, we can now be a part of that." ■

Number of on-line university courses skyrockets

WebCT spreads among U of A professors

By Ryan Smith

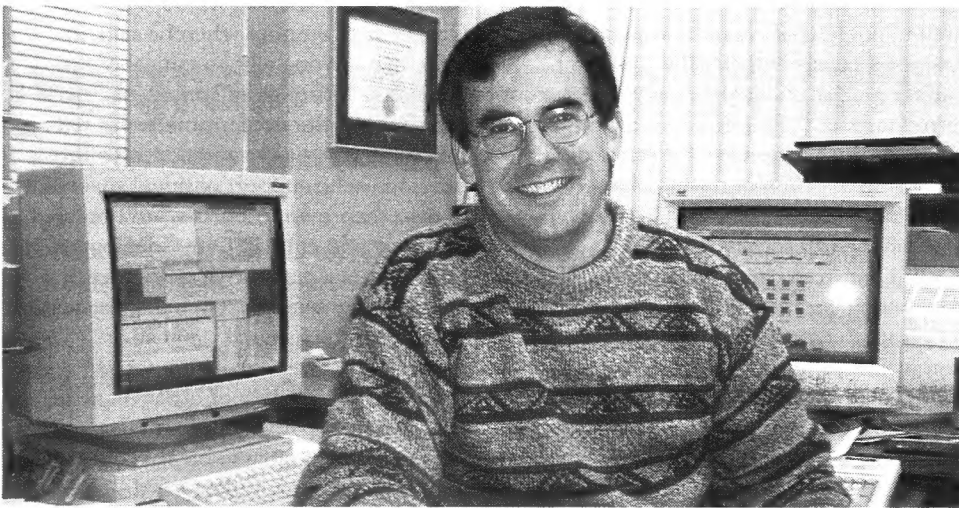
The University of Alberta was the largest user of WebCT applications in North America during the 1999/2000 academic year, according to a recently released report confirmed by the software providers. And the numbers keep increasing.

"The growth has been absolutely phenomenal," U of A Associate Vice-President (Academic) Dr. Anne-Marie Decore said of the amount of U of A courses that have incorporated WebCT, the software that allows professors to create and customize their own on-line learning resources.

The number of U of A courses incorporating WebCT has risen from 375 in the 1998/1999 academic year to more than 1,000 in 2000/2001. The amount of student registrations in these courses over the same period has grown from 14,500 to more than 100,000.

Susan Stein, the head administrator of WebCT services on campus, said that not only are the numbers increasing, but so too is the amount of applications offered. "We're getting more and more inquiries all the time. At first we try to ease professors into it, asking them just to make the syllabus or class notes available [on the Web], but as it grows, we see professors doing more and more."

Dr. Carl Mendoza, of the U of A's Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences is one such professor. Mendoza said he worked with an industrial intern-



Dr. Carl Mendoza says the Web CT experiment is working, as the number of courses offered on the Web increases.

ship program student two years ago, for eight months, to transfer his previous Earth and Atmospheric Sciences 223 course overheads and paper-based quizzes and assignments to Power Point software and the Web.

"It was a huge amount of work but the end product is worth it," he said. "I learned a huge amount, both about computer programming and my own discipline."

Results of a student survey conducted half-way through and again at the end of his course last year indicated students enjoyed the Web component of his course.

He's expanded the Web elements for the course this year. Among other additions, Mendoza has added enough reference material so that a \$140 textbook that used to be required for the course is now optional.

Dr. Isaac Isaac of the U of A physics department has also been busy with WebCT, using it in four of the courses he teaches. "I'm just an amateur on the computer," he said. "But I learned to do what I needed to do, and I found all the WebCT help I needed through existing U of A resources, particularly the CNS [Computing and Network Services] Web site."

Second-year engineering student John Kaiden said WebCT is a good resource supplement in two of his classes—Sociology 366 and Math 201—but added it is frustrating when it doesn't work. "Usually we can access the materials, but my sociology course relies a lot on the Web and every once in awhile you can't get the info through the course Web site when you need it—and if you put things off to the end you can get screwed," he said.

Decore said accessing on-line materials is something students must prepare for, just as when they try to access material through traditional means. "Sometimes the library is closed or the book you need isn't in," she said.

She added that the U of A computer system is sturdy, but if there are situations in which students can't reasonably get the information they need, "common sense prevails and we make the appropriate adjustments—but the rules of the game don't change just because things are on the Web."

First-year science student Katie Heffring said she's had no problem accessing the Web for her Math 113 course. "It's easy to use and a great resource for information," she said.

"It helps everyone because it makes it easier to learn and we all have to know how to use computers to help us find jobs when we graduate," she added. ■

University leads the way into World Bank network

Initiative provides framework for international education

By Richard Cairney

The University of Alberta has become the first university in North America to join the World Bank's Global Development Learning Network (GDLN).

The GDLN has been established by the World Bank, at a cost of \$10 million (US) per year, to expand the ability of governments, development agencies and academics to share expertise. The network now links multimedia centres in 26 countries, and others are in the waiting.

"We are seen very much as the point guys on this in Canada," said Terry Mackey, director of international programs with University of Alberta International. "Other universities around the world are looking at signing up, but we are the first in the field in North America. This is a major strategic initiative of the World Bank."

The idea behind the GDLN is that developing nations can help developing countries by sharing information. Under the program, for example, the U of A's Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies could provide university-level science courses to students in Ukraine. Or medical students here could study a course on tropical diseases provided by professors in Uganda.

"This is a genuine global network," said Mackey.

The U of A is now considering providing GDLN members with information on resource management, and students here will benefit as other members begin providing content. "There are levels of expertise in different parts of the world that we just don't have," Mackey added.

"The idea is to bridge the knowledge

gap," said Doug Owram, the U of A's vice-president (academic). "How can you develop your economy if you don't have access to the knowledge the advanced economies have?"

While the university provides courses on the Internet, Owram said membership in the GDLN would cause entire courses to be shifted to the Net. "Right now we have what I call partial online (programs). The whole course isn't online."

The U of A would, inevitably, provide entire courses on the Net, but the World Bank initiative "will give us a framework," Owram added.

The U of A has strong connections with existing members of the network, and participation will increase the U of A's reach worldwide. "The strategic component to

this is that we see it as a way of reaching larger numbers of people," Mackey said.

Owram agrees. Participation in the network "allows [the U of A] to foster relationships with these universities," he said. "And we can become part of the audience, too—we will be able to access content built by other partners."

Mackey sees the potential for partnerships as being virtually endless. Even at home, he said, it's possible for the U of A to join forces with the Canadian International Development Agency to provide expertise overseas.

"We are trying to harness some of the strengths of the university to do this and link it with existing CIDA programs that we can then link into the network," Owram said. ■

Making a smaller footprint

New industrial research chair will help protect Alberta's landscapes

By Ryan Smith

Alberta's resource-rich economy just keeps on growing but that growth comes with a price: the land itself suffers from new developments. And with an estimated \$50 billion in development planned for Alberta in the coming years, the university and industry have joined forces to study the effects and search for ways to mitigate them. The U of A, government and resource industries have established a new \$2.5 million environmental research chair to monitor growth.

"We're going to see unprecedented industrial growth in Alberta, and this project is a proactive step toward using science to coordinate environmental planning and sustainable terrestrial development in Alberta," said Dr. Stan Boutin, the U of A biological sciences professor who will hold the chair.

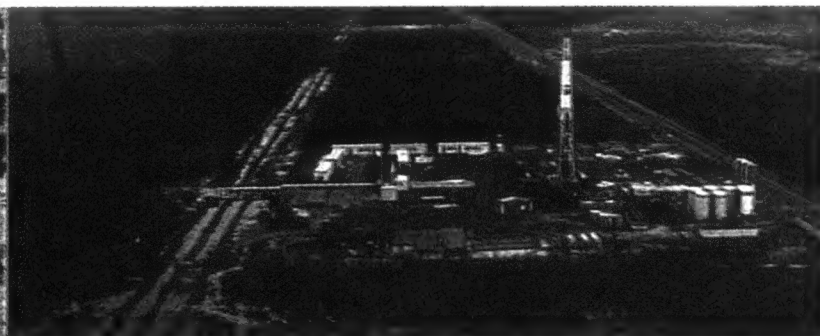
Working in northeast Alberta, in areas that range from "pristine and untouched to places that have been affected by heavy industrial activity," Boutin said the research will focus on the degree of terrestrial biodiversity and the density of certain animal populations in these areas, among other scientific measures.

One of the major sponsors of the chair is Alberta-Pacific Forestry Inc., an organization Boutin has worked with over the past 10 years. He said he is not troubled

that part of his funding will come from private business. "I have a long history working with Alberta-Pacific, and I'm convinced they believe the best development decisions are based on good science, and every time in the past when we've made recommendations regardless of what we've

found we haven't received any resistance from them in accepting our findings."

Boutin feels Alberta-Pacific Forestry Inc. deserves credit for being a "proactive force" in creating the chair, which is officially called the NSERC/Al-Pac/ACR Senior Industrial Research Chair in Integrated Landscape Management. "This is the first time there has been an effort among all the industries, especially forestry and oil and gas, to co-ordinate research and figure out the total environmental costs of development," he added. "In the past there's been a lack of co-ordination, and costly mistakes have been made—the



Dr. Stan Boutin has been appointed to head a new industrial research program examining development in Alberta.

building of separate development roads that could have been shared is an example of this.

"All the parts are in place now, from industry to government policy-makers, and there's no excuses now. Each bit of development creates what we call an 'industry footprint' on the ecosystem, and through our research we hope to minimize the size of these footprints."

Funding, distributed over five years, comes from the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) - \$930,000; Alberta-Pacific Forestry Industries Inc. (Al-Pac) - \$625,000; the petroleum industry - \$350,000; Alberta government - \$250,000 and the U of A Faculty of Science - \$375,000.

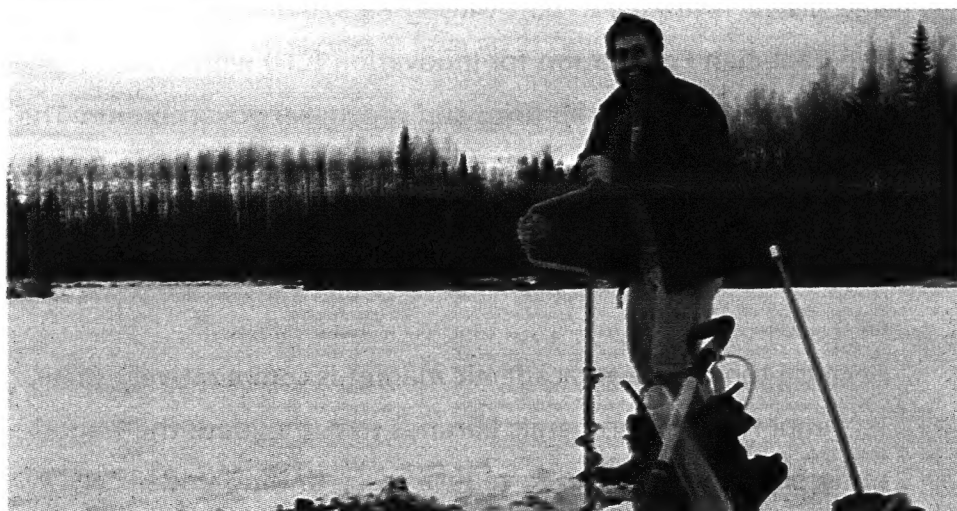
This new chair is a key component of the Alberta Chamber of Resources' (ACR) new Integrated Landscape Management (ILM) program.

"The ILM program could very well change the way industry does business in Alberta," said Bill Hunter, vice-president of Alberta-Pacific Forestry Industries Inc. and ACR president. "The chair will provide sound science upon which we can base decisions about which industry initiatives will produce the best value, both economic and environmental, for our efforts."

NSERC President Dr. Tom Brzustowski praised Boutin's research history, adding that Boutin's current project is an example to show what can be done "when determination and common sense prevail." ■

Study aimed at preserving wetlands

By Ryan Smith



Dr. Kevin Devito will lead research on the way development affects wetlands.

Alberta's boreal forest wetlands are about to get the kind of attention environmentalists believe is long due. A University of Alberta research project to determine the patterns and differences in these wetlands, and how they may be affected by natural and human development, has been granted \$2.2 million.

"These wetlands are one of the most important breeding grounds for waterfowl in North America," said University of

Alberta biological science professor Dr. Kevin Devito, who will lead the research. "Our primary objective is to assess the landscape and climate controls of each of the wetlands—and every wetland is different—to try to determine how development may affect the hydrology and ecology of each area."

For example, it is standard for each wetland area to be given a "buffer strip"—an area in which the trees around it are left

untouched in the event of development near the wetland. However, Devito said, some wetlands may need larger buffers than the standard, while others may need less, depending on the particular relationship between each wetland and its surrounding landscape.

"Some wetlands may receive a lot of water run-off from an adjacent hillside and others may not, so we can adjust the development accordingly," Devito said.

Gary Stewart, a manager of conservation programs at Ducks Unlimited, which is one of the agencies funding the research, said, "An ability to measure the importance of specific wetlands or wetlands types...will ultimately affect our ability to achieve habitat conservation goals for the region."

Devito and his team of researchers, which includes Drs. Lee Foote and Suzanne Bayley of the U of A and Dr. Irena Creed of the University of Western Ontario, will publish their findings after they have been peer reviewed. It is expected that government and industry officials will use the results to determine and implement practices that will minimize disruption to the wetland ecosystems and

maximize economic development.

The wetlands project is one of two major environmental research initiatives recently announced at the U of A. Devito said he worked to receive funding on the wetlands project for the past three years and hopes the trend toward funding environmental research continues.

"I'm impressed by how progressive the forestry industry in Alberta is," Devito said. "And just in the past couple of months the provincial government has shown that they are receptive and willing to hear what researchers have to say about the environment."

Funding for Devito's research comes from a host of sponsors, including the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (\$800,000); Ducks Unlimited (\$638,000); Weyerhaeuser (\$300,000); Alberta-Pacific Industries Ltd. (\$285,000); and Syncrude (\$225,000).

Federal Minister of Justice Anne McLellan called the funding partnership among government, the University of Alberta and "enlightened" companies a "revolution" toward the shared goal of developing "sustainable use of landscape." ■

Agricultural growth threatens fresh water

Current practices could cause more harm than good

By Phoebe Dey

If agricultural expansion continues at its present rate for the next 50 years, the environmental effects could be disastrous, says the University of Alberta's Dr. David Schindler, co-author of a paper published in the April 12 edition of the journal Science.

"The forecast is pretty gloomy," said Schindler, a biological sciences professor at the U of A and the study's lone Canadian contributor. "Using the logic that what shaped the past will work for predicting the future, we came up with a plan to look at the parameters for agriculture in a 25 and 50-year time frame, and we found that the environmental consequences are very serious."

The researchers used seven environmental variables related to agriculture—such as phosphate fertilizer and imported pesticide—to forecast the impact agriculture could have on natural ecosystems during the next 50 years.

Projected increases in global nitrogen and phosphorus fertilization and irrigation would cause significant losses of biodiversity, as well as marked changes in the composition and functioning of both land and aquatic ecosystems, say the authors. Without adequate sewage control, too much phosphorus—an essential plant nutrient and a byproduct of intensive livestock operations—can cause massive algae

growth and fish kills.

Findings include a forecast for global nitrogen use to be 1.6 times greater than present amounts by 2020 and almost triple current amounts by 2050. The large projected increases in global nitrogen, phosphorus and irrigation water would have significant negative impacts on fresh waters, argue the authors. In many areas, there is insufficient water to meet projected demands, said Schindler, who was recently named one of three finalists for the Gerhard Herzberg Gold Medal in Science and Engineering—commonly regarded as Canada's most prestigious award in those fields.

"The bottom line is that we're going to have to start considering that there have to be limits to population growth," he said. "The things we've been doing with the Green Revolution have helped, but we can't keep this type of agricultural production up forever. The fertilizer we're using, for example, is damaging our fresh water, which is even more important to us than food."

Although there are likely to be mechanisms and policies that can reduce or perhaps reverse many of the trends identified in the paper, those solutions will not be achieved unless many more resources are dedicated to their discovery and implementation, argue the authors. ■

The farm under the sand

Researcher challenges conventional thinking on disappearance of Viking community

By Terese Brasen

In 1991, two caribou hunters stumbled over a log on a snowy Greenland riverbank, an unusual event because Greenland is above the tree line. Closer investigation uncovered rock-hard sheep droppings. The hunters had stumbled on a 500-year-old Viking farm that lay hidden beneath the sand, gift-wrapped and preserved by nature for future archeologists.

Gården under Sandet or GUS, Danish for the farm under the sand, would become the first major Viking find in Greenland since the 1920s.

"GUS is beautifully preserved because, once it was buried, it was frozen," explains University of Alberta Anthropologist Dr. Charles Schweger. "Things that are perishable and normally disappear are found at GUS."

A specialist in Arctic paleo-ecology and geo-archeology, Schweger joined the international archeological team that would spend the next seven years sifting through sand at GUS.

The famous Viking, Eric the Red, probably didn't know where he was headed when, adrift on the North Atlantic in 981 AD, he bumped into the southern coast of Greenland. Eric returned to Iceland three years later and enticed about 500 fellow Vikings to follow him and settle the new country.

"The Norse arrived in Greenland 1,000 years ago and became very well established," says Schweger, describing the Viking farms and settlements that crowded the southeast and southwest coasts of Greenland for almost 400 years.

"The Greenland settlements were the most distant of all European medieval sites in the world," said Schweger. "Then the Norse disappear, and the question has always been: what happened?"

Time was not on the archeological team's side. Earlier digs had explored the southern tip of Greenland, the most settled area of the country where Eric the Red first landed. These early digs merely scratched the surface because the archeologists were interested in the buildings and architecture, not what lay beneath. The GUS site was up the West Coast, deep inside a fjord. The river was advancing, swallowing the site, so it was it was important to act quickly.

The University of Alberta, Greenland and the Danish government combined resources and pushed ahead on the first Greenland excavation since the 1930s. The team would excavate the complete site, looking at the entire history and development of the farm, not just the surface buildings.

Schweger recalls vividly the day the team uncovered GUS. Smells frozen in permafrost for 500 years exploded into the air. "It stunk to high heavens," says Schweger. "There was no question about

this being a farm." The Viking ships that had brought Icelandic adventurers to Greenland may have been mini versions of Noah's Ark with sheep, goats, horses and Vikings sharing the crowded space. The Greenland Vikings raised sheep and fabricated woollen garments. The centre of the farm was a typical Viking longhouse, the communal building where Vikings gathered around the fire. The settlement flourished. In the North Atlantic, walrus, seal and whale were abundant and the Greenlanders made rope from walrus hide and controlled the European walrus tusk market.

Every summer, the team raced against the river. In 1998, when researchers finally abandoned GUS to the river, 90 per cent of the site had been excavated. Artifacts packaged and taken to the lab include pieces of cloth and sheep combs used to remove wool without shearing the animal. The site gave up metal hinges, locks, keys and wooden barrels. The Vikings appear to have traded their northern wares for metal and wooden products unavailable in Greenland. For them, a trip to Iceland or Norway was like a shopping spree at Home Hardware.

We know about Eric the Red and the Greenland settlement because years after the Vikings had given up their pagan ways, Snorri Sturluson collected Viking stories and penned the Icelandic sagas. "The Icelanders wrote everything down," says Schweger, puzzled that the literature says nothing about what happened to the Norse in Greenland.

What did happen? Theories abound. Tryggvi Oleson in his 1963 book, *Early Voyages and Northern Approaches*, proposed a theory which still has some credibility. He believed the Vikings and northern aboriginal people intermarried to produce the unique Thule people, ancestors of the modern Eskimo.

One reigning expert on Norse extinction in Greenland is Dr. Thomas McGovern from City University of New York. McGovern is also chair of the North Atlantic Biocultural Organization, an international research association interested in the relationship between changing climate and people in the North Atlantic. He believes the Norse did not adapt completely to Greenland because they never adopted Inuit ring-seal hunting techniques. The Inuit used buoys or floats and hunted ring seal from kayaks or through the ice. These techniques do not appear in Norse culture. McGovern and other paleo-ecologists also



The rugged landscape of Greenland seemed the unlikely of places to settle. But a Viking settlement (drawing and aerial photo at left) once thrived on Greenland's West Coast. A U of A researcher has shed light on what may have caused the settlement's demise.

believe the Norse were poor farmers.

But Schweger says the evidence comes from the southern or eastern settlement where the excavations only looked at the surface. "There is a lot of sediment thrown around, and it suggests to these researchers that the Norse were poor farmers. The theory is poor agricultural practices caused the sod to break up, and the winds eroded this and blew sand all over the landscape."

While Danish and Greenland researchers look at GUS buildings and artifacts, the U of A's role is to study organic material. Cross-sections of the GUS soil contain evidence that challenge McGovern's theories and offer brand-new understanding of the Vikings in Greenland.

"The ring seal is only one species of seal. The Norse hunted everything else—walrus, whales, harbour seals," says Schweger, moving quickly to part two of his McGovern challenge. The argument that the Vikings were poor farmers doesn't make sense upon close examination of the GUS organic material. "There is no evidence that they were destroying their fields. Quite the opposite. They were improving upon them."

It is not surprising that the Greenland Vikings chose to farm at the mouth of a fjord. The Vikings who settled Iceland and later moved to Greenland were originally from Norway, where farming technology grew up around fjords. The centre of a fjord farm is a meadow where animals graze during winter months.

Cross-sections of the GUS soil show

the Vikings began their settlement by burning off Birch brush to form a meadow. Over the next 300 to 400 years, the meadow soil steadily improved its nutritional qualities, showing that the Greenland Vikings weren't poor farmers, as McGovern and others have suggested. "At GUS, the amount of organic matter and the quality of soil increased and sustained farming for 400 years," says Schweger. "If they were poor farmers, then virtually all the farming in North America is poor farming."

Schweger believes the sand that packaged and preserved GUS, also ruined the site, polluting the river the Vikings relied on for fresh water. The soil was healthy and nutritious. Then, suddenly, farming stopped and the soil was encapsulated in sand.

A massive ice sheet covers about 85 per cent of Greenland, about 2,600,000 cubic kilometres of ice—enough to raise sea levels by 6.4 metres if it were to melt. Sheets of ice sliding down the mountain toward GUS may have pushed sand over the eastern coast of Greenland, burying the Viking settlements. The sand slide was probably a major catastrophic event, comparable to an earthquake.

The Danish Antiquity Society will publish the GUS findings once the international lab results have been tabulated and debated. The team that sifted through sand summer after summer may tell the world new stories about the Vikings who farmed and traded in the North Atlantic then suddenly, and inexplicably, disappeared. ■

Icelandic sagas sail into library collections

By Ryan Smith

The University of Alberta library collection has been bolstered with editions of "Canada's first recorded history," according to Icelandic Consul General Svavar Gestsson. Representing the people and government of Iceland, Gestsson was on campus recently to donate three sets of a five-volume, English language translation of all 40 Icelandic sagas.

"These books document the landing of Leif Ericson at L'Anse aux Meadows in northern Newfoundland in the year 1000—the first time a European set foot in the Western Hemisphere," Gestsson said.

The sets, valued at more than \$700 each, are the first, co-ordinated English translation of all 40 Icelandic sagas. More than 30 scholars worked for over a decade to translate the sagas. Two sets will be

made available in the Rutherford Library, while the third set will remain in the U of A's Book and Records Depository.

Although the volumes are not "exact" histories, Gestsson said they provide "the frame—the main pillars—of history that has been proven through artifacts and letters found in Rome, for example."

Dr. Christopher Hale, a professor of modern languages and cultural studies who teaches a course on Icelandic sagas, said the sagas "are not historical novels, but they are fiction based on oral and written tradition with some basis in history."

However else they are described, Hale said that the sagas, particularly the family sagas, are unique to Iceland. "They were originally written in the Icelandic language in the 12th and 13th centuries and

they are romances and wonderful stories—and this is the first set of family sagas in one set that I've ever heard about."

The U of A is one of many institutions to receive sets of the sagas from the Icelandic government. Gestsson said the gifts are meant to commemorate Ericson's landing in Newfoundland 1,000 years ago and teach people in the English-speaking world about Iceland's rich heritage.

Dr. Merrill Distad, associate director of libraries (bibliographic services), said such gifts are much appreciated. "While administration [at the U of A] does its best to increase our budget annually, it's just not feasible for us to keep up with what people expect us to have. More and more we depend on the good will of our donors."

And donors do make significant con-

tributions to the U of A library system, which is the second largest university system in Canada. Distad said the U of A has made out receipts for donations-in-kind for close to \$1 million each year for the past couple of years. "And that doesn't include the non-tax deductible donations we receive, like the one from the Icelandic government."

Distad added that the U of A has received many "interesting and high-profile" donations recently, including 100 literature and history volumes from the Chinese Consulate to support the study of Chinese language and culture at the U of A. Louis Chor, the U of A's librarian for East Asian holdings, said there have been indications that the Chinese gift may be offered annually. ■

Plenty to learn at celebrity "boot camp"

Student's reality-TV experience demanding, rewarding

By Gilbert A. Bouchard



Now back to the demands of nursing studies, aspiring star Irene Dimailig knows she can become a success in the entertainment industry.

Pop stars may be spawned by reality television these days, but Irene Dimailig knows they need to be born with enough talent and be willing to work hard enough in order to stand out from the teeming crowds.

Last summer, Dimailig, a third-year nursing student at the University of Alberta, displayed enough polish and raw talent to become one of 25 finalists picked out of 4,000 cross-Canada audition hopefuls and be featured on the Canadian edition of the TV show *Popstars*.

The energetic 21-year-old then went on to be one of the final 15 contestants in the weekly reality-style television program.

The goal of *Popstars* is to groom, record and video a five-member pop group whose members are culled, on-air, from the ranks of the 25 finalists in a grueling judging process. On this program, there are no Lana Turner-style discoveries while lounging at a soda counter.

"The [*Popstars*] boot camp was very intense," explains the dedicated performer, who has been singing since the tender age of five. "It's really hard work, three to four hours of dancing in the morning, followed by three to four hours of singing in the afternoon with judges constantly watching you."

While certainly a boon to Dimailig's larger career goals and a coup for her performance resumé, she's quick to add that she didn't get a lot of screen time for the "five or six episodes" of the show she was featured on. It was a disappointing situation, given the huge effort and her finishing as high in the standings as she did.

"It's been a great experience and I didn't expect to make it that far but they really didn't show me enough on the show for the audience to get a real assessment of me and my singing, which was why I was there. In that sense it was disappointing," she says, adding that she continues to watch the ground-breaking show she helped launch.

The show's process was also stressful because of its timing, said Dimailig, whose nursing studies are insurance in case her singing career doesn't work out. Not only did she miss the whole first week of school, she wasn't able to tell anybody,

with the exception of her instructors, why she was away—a secret that became onerous to keep when she returned from Toronto.

"It was especially hard keeping the secret when I came back, and a real emotional roller coaster given that I could only talk to my parents and close family," she notes. "It was especially difficult because I came back on a Friday night and had to jump back into school instantly on the Monday morning."

Overall, Dimailig knows the process proved to her that she has the ability to handle the intensity of the entertain-

ment lifestyle, and underlined her desire to succeed for the love of the art form and not just for the allure of money or fame. And, even though her air-time was short, Dimailig has been recognized on the street and in the mall because of her television exposure, adding to her amusement at how easily reality television shows can create celebrities.

In fact, the great appeal to reality television is exactly this ability to create instant celebrities viewers identify with and can "discuss around the water cooler," says Dr. Graeme Turner, director of the Centre for Critical and Cultural Studies and a visiting guest lecturer at the U of A.

Going further, Turner believes that this obsession with the creation of celebrity status via the media is part of a major cultural shift. "We're seeing the media spend more and more time on issues of identity rather than news or even entertainment."

Turner is also a firm believer that celebrities—if not stars—are definitely made.

"People have to be trained as celebrities, and it's really not easy," he said. "You know it's difficult simply because of how many people make a real mess of it." ■

"It's been a great experience and I didn't expect to make it that far but they really didn't show me enough on the show for the audience to get a real assessment of me and my singing, which was why I was there. In that sense it was disappointing."

—Nursing student Irene Dimailig

events

AWA BANQUET

ACADEMIC WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

Tuesday, April 24, 2001, 7:00 p.m.

Annual General Meeting of the Academic Women's Association/Woman of the Year Award Dinner. Papaschase Room, Faculty Club. Please contact Patricia Valentine, patricia.valentine@ualberta.ca, to join AWA and attend the AWA banquet.

BRUCE PEEL SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

GRAPHIC DESIGN AND FINE PRINTING: FIVE CENTURIES

March 12 to April 30

From the shelves of the Bruce Peel Special Collections, selected examples of fine printing and graphic design spanning the years 1500-2000. Rutherford South.

CANADIAN COCHRANE SYMPOSIUM 2001

The Canadian Cochrane Symposium 2001 will be held in Edmonton, Alberta November 22-24, 2001. Location: Bernard Snell Hall. Times: 8:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. The Symposium will include presentations and hands-on sessions focused on the theme of "Marketing the Evidence" for good healthcare decision making. Speakers will cover the Canadian and International perspectives of this topic. Deadlines for submission of abstracts is June 15, 2001. For more information, please visit the Symposium website at: <http://www.ualberta.ca/CCNC/symposium2001>

EXHIBITION

MC MULLEN GALLERY

April 7 to June 3, 2001

Now showing at the McMullen Gallery, "Sculpture: An Intimate Conversation" is an inside exposé of the sculptors' world. Exhibiting artists will be conducting FREE demonstrations/workshops each Thursday between 2 to 5 p.m. at the McMullen Gallery commencing Thursday, April 19. Hours of the Gallery: Monday to Friday, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays, 1 to 8 p.m. 8440 - 112 Street. Phone 407-7152. Email: spointe@cha.ab.ca Contact Michelle Casavant or Susan Pointe.

RETIREMENT PLANNING SEMINAR FOR ACADEMIC STAFF

The Office of the Vice-President (Academic) and Provost and the Association of Academic Staff of the University of Alberta (AAS:UA) invite members of the AAS:UA and their spouses to attend a two-day retirement planning seminar, facilitated by Rein Selles, President of Retirement/Life Challenge Ltd.

May 4-5, 2001, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

This seminar is in the format given in previous years; it is free and will be held in the Map Room, Lister Hall. Enrollment is limited and is encouraged for those not having attended previously. If you are interested in attending, please call Janice Forgues, 492-5321 or e-mail: janice.forgues@ualberta.ca

UPCOMING LUNCH & LEARN PRESENTATIONS

Presented by the Health Recovery Support Unit, Human Resources. Location: Heritage Lounge, Athabasca Hall. Time: 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. Cost: Free!

April 25

Topic: "Strengthening Self Esteem."

April 26

Topic: "Making the Most of Your Emotional Intelligence."

Snacks and cold beverages will be provided! Seating is limited. To register or for more information contact: Sarah Treby, 492-0659 or email: sarah.treby@hrs.ualberta.ca or visit our website www.hrs.ualberta.ca/efap/news for an updated list of all workshops and other offerings.

STANDARD FIRST AID/HEARTSAVER COURSES

The Office of Environmental Health & Safety has arranged for Standard First Aid/Heartsaver courses to be held on campus once again this year. The training is comprised of two full-day sessions (8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.) with morning, lunch and afternoon breaks. The cost is \$80.00 per person. The first course will be held in early April and the last at the end of October. Registration is limited due to classroom size. For further information and registration forms please call Cindy Ferris at 492-1810 or e-mail cindy.ferris@ualberta.ca

2001 RESEARCH DAY

The Department of Medicine will hold the 2001 Research Day (Residents, Graduate Students and Post Doctoral Fellows). Special guest adjudicator, Dr. Alan Bernstein, President, Canadian Institutes of Health Research.

Thursday, May 3, from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Oral presentations will take place in Classroom F, (2J4.02 WMC). Posters will be on display all day in the Lower Level Foyer of Bernard Snell Hall with adjudication taking place from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Lunch will be available and all are welcome! For more information please call 407-3131.

MUSIC

DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC

April 27, 8:00 p.m.

Faculty and Friends. Michael Massey, conductor. An evening with Philip Jones, Compositions and arrangements. Unless otherwise indicated: Admission \$5/student/senior, \$10/adult. Convocation Hall, Arts Building. To confirm concert information, please call 492-0601.

PHILOSOPHERS' CAFÉ

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA PHILOSOPHERS' CAFÉ

Saturday, April 28, 1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Topic: "Is 'cyberculture' an oxymoron? (Is the Internet a threat to our culture?). Guest scholar: Wes Cooper, Professor of Philosophy. Moderator: Bernard Linsky, Chair, Department of Philosophy. Place: Nina's Restaurant, 10139 - 124 Street.

LANGUAGE CAFES

SPANISH LANGUAGE CAFES

Saturdays through April, 3:00 p.m.

Constanza Rojas, facilitator. Upper Crust Café, 10909 - 86 Avenue. Information: rob.desjardins@ualberta.ca

THE FINE ARTS

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April 10-22, 2001

Visual Communication Design and Industrial Design, "Freshly Squeezed: Bachelor of Design Grad Show 2001." Fine Arts Building Gallery.

SPRING SYMPOSIUM

LEADERS IN LEARNING ON-LINE 2001

April 30 to May 4

The 3rd annual Leaders in Learning is an informative and innovative 5-day symposium. Sponsored by Academic Technologies for Learning (ATL) and Applied Arts, the symposium will explore several web-based technologies currently being used to develop, enhance, and deliver curriculum and enhance communication between students and instructors. For more information, check www.atl.ualberta.ca/online or call 492-2248.


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FACULTY OF ARTS

April 30, 7:00 p.m.
Karol J. Krotki, Sociology and Wacław M. Osadnik, Modern Languages and Cultural Studies.
"Contemporary Polish Culture" (round-table discussion). Syrena Club, 10960 – 104 Street. Part of Polish Week in Edmonton.

DEPARTMENT OF BIOCHEMISTRY

April 26, 3:00 p.m.
Dr. Roseline Godbout, "Asymmetric expression and gene regulation in the differentiating retina." Room 207, Heritage Medical Research Centre.

DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

April 20, 4:00 p.m.
Steven John Zimmerly, "Group II introns as retroelements: an inferred history of their spread and evolution." Room M-149, Biological Sciences Building.

April 23, 3:00 p.m.
Dr. Ian Chin-Sang, Department of Biology, University of California at Santa Cruz, speaking on "The Role of Ephrin Signalling in C. elegans Neuronal and Epidermal Morphogenesis." Room M-149, Biological Sciences Building.

April 26, 4:00 p.m.
Mark Nichols, "Using yeast to study estrogen receptors and cancer." Room M-149, Biological Sciences Building.

April 27, 4:00 p.m.
Paula Monaghan-Nichols, "A Molecular and genetic analysis of the tailless gene in mice: one mean gene." M-149, Biological Sciences Building.
May 23, 4:30 p.m.
Stephen J. O'Brien, "The genes that limit AIDS." Room M-149, Biological Sciences Building.

DEPARTMENT OF CELL BIOLOGY

April 23, 9:00 to 10:00 a.m.
Dr. Ormond Macdougald, University of Michigan, "Inhibition of Adipogenesis by Wnt Signaling." Classroom D, Walter Mackenzie Centre. Sponsored by the students and post-doctoral fellows of the CIHR

Group on the Molecular and Cell Biology of Lipids and by the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research.

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, PETER ELBOW TALK AND WORKSHOPS

May 10, 3:30 p.m.
Topic: "What's Central in the Act of Writing?" Room L-1 Humanities Centre.

May 11, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon
Topic: "Breathing Life into the Text: Using Performance and Voice to Teach Literature Collaboratively." Room L-1 Humanities Centre.

May 11, 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Topic: "High Stakes and Low Stakes in Assigning and Responding to Student Writing." Room L-1 Humanities Centre. Workshop space is limited. Please sign up by e-mailing: betsy.sargent@ualberta.ca

JOHN DOSSETOR HEALTH ETHICS CENTRE

April 20, 12:00 noon to 1:00 p.m.
Gary Goldsand, Clinical Ethics resident, Royal Alexandra Hospital, PhD candidate, University of Toronto, "In House Ethics Education: Evolving Perspectives." Room 207, Heritage Medical Research Centre.

DEPARTMENT OF MEDICINE

May 3, 5:00 p.m.
Ninth Annual E. Garner King Memorial Lecture "Genomics and its Impact on the Health Care System in the 21st Century." Presented by Dr. Alan Bernstein, President, Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Ottawa, Ontario. Bernard Snell Hall, Walter Mackenzie Centre.

PHILOSOPHY

April 20, 3:30 p.m.
Edwin Mares, Department of Philosophy, Victoria University of Wellington, "How to Choose a Logic." Room B-05 Business Building.
April 27, 3:30 p.m.
Vladan Djordjevic, "McGee's Counter-Example to Modus Ponens." Room B-05 Business Building.

notices

Please send notices attention Folio 400 Athabasca Hall, University of Alberta, T6G 2E8 or e-mail public.affairs@ualberta.ca. Notices should be received by 3 p.m. one week prior to publication.

The Workplace Recognition Committee is collecting stories of successful recognition that has occurred at the University of Alberta, to share with the campus. If you have a story to share, let us know and your name will be entered in a draw. Here is an example of one such success story: 'Heidi' painted a hand-made card and was surprised and pleased to see it framed

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Please submit stories to us by campus mail (2-40 Assiniboia Hall) or by e-mail to workplace.wellness@ualberta.ca. Be sure to include your name, department and contact information. Deadline for entry into the draw is June 15.

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May 1 - 4, 2001 - Limited services available at U of A Libraries

DRA System Unavailable due to a hardware upgrade:

- Circulation will be limited to charging materials out only. No renewals, requests, recalls or fine payments will be possible during this time. The Book and Record Depository (BARD) will not be offering any library service during this time period.
- NEOS Libraries' Catalogue (including access to Borrower Information), as well as Applied Science & Technology Abstracts, Biological & Agricultural Index, Environment Abstracts, General Science Abstracts, Humanities Abstracts, PolarInfo, Reader's Guide Abstracts, Social Sciences Abstracts, and The William C. Wonders Map Collection Database will be unavailable on these days.

We recommend that you find & sign out any material you want prior to April 30 - as you will not be able to use the catalogue to locate material from May 1 - 4. If you require any material brought to campus from another NEOS library, you are advised to request it by April 24th - just to make sure it has time to arrive & be processed before May 1.

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Tuesday, 24th April 2001

9:00 am to 11:00 am Room 265 CAB

Tuesday, 24th April 2001

1:30 pm to 3:30 pm Room 243 CAB

Wednesday, 25th April 2001

9:00 am to 11:00 am Room 243 CAB

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Please forward your résumé by April 27, 2001 to the Co-ordinator, Human Resources, Faculty of Nursing, 3-126A Clinical Sciences Building, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta T6G 2G3.

In accordance with Canadian Immigration requirements, this advertisement is directed to Canadian citizens and permanent residents. If suitable Canadian citizens and permanent residents cannot be found, other individuals will be considered.

The records arising from this competition will be managed in accordance with provisions of the Alberta Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

The University hires on the basis of merit. We are committed to the principle of equity in employment. We welcome diversity and encourage applications from all qualified women and men, including persons with disabilities, members of visible minorities, and Aboriginal persons.

EVALUATOR ACADEMIC TECHNOLOGIES FOR LEARNING

Academic Technologies for Learning (ATL) invites applications for a full-time academic contract position to assist in various ATL projects evaluating university courses, programs and their associated modes of delivery. The candidate will join a group of evaluation staff in ATL working to enhance the teaching and learning environment at the University of Alberta.

The position will involve extensive consultation with academic staff members on their requirements for conducting needs assessments and formative and summative evaluations as they design and deliver courses and programs and apply new delivery models. The incumbent will collaborate in the design and administration of a variety of evaluations, including survey instruments, and the interpretation of the resulting data. (S)He will also be involved in the design and conduct of focus groups and the interpretation of that data. Part of the position will be in a staff developmental role to enhance the ability of faculty to conduct and interpret evaluations. It is anticipated that the incumbent will model the scholarship of teaching by disseminating the results of evaluative processes through publishing, presentations at professional meetings and other means.

The successful candidate will report to the senior evaluation manager in ATL, Dr. Stanley Varnhagen.

Essential qualifications:

- A graduate qualification in evaluation, education or related discipline.
- Skills in qualitative and quantitative research methods.
- Good report writing skills.
- Computer skills using the Microsoft Office suite and statistical packages (e.g. SPSS).
- Good interpersonal skills, particularly in a collaborative team environment.

Desirable qualifications:

The ability to synthesize current issues in the evaluation of distributed education initiatives, the application of information and communication technologies in teaching and learning, and lifelong learning.

Experience using computer based instructional tools (e.g. asynchronous and synchronous communication tools).

Experience in conducting face-to-face and online workshops for professional staff.

Experience using qualitative analysis software.

A record of communication of scholarly activity.

An application letter, curriculum vitae and names of three persons willing to provide references should be sent to: Dr. Katy Campbell, Acting Director,

Academic Technologies for Learning, University Extension Centre, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, T6G 2T4. (katy.campbell@ualberta.ca). Details on ATL may be found at our web site: <http://www.atl.ualberta.ca>

Submission deadline: April 30, 2001 (or until a suitable candidate is appointed).

INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGNER ACADEMIC TECHNOLOGIES FOR LEARNING

Job Description

Reporting to the director of Academic Technologies for Learning, this academic position provides instructional design and evaluation consultation to individual faculty members and ATL clients on a course or program basis. Specifically, the instructional designer performs the following duties:

1. Consults with individual faculty members and ATL clients in the course development process:
 - a. identifying learning outcomes and preferences
 - b. determining teaching styles and preferences
 - c. aligning instructional strategies to desired outcomes through authentic assessment strategies
 - d. recommending appropriate technological support to achieve desired outcomes
 - e. coaching faculty and clients to teach, and assess, with technology
 - f. planning formative evaluation procedures
 - g. interpreting evaluation results
 - h. assisting faculty and clients re-develop instructional based on learner evaluations
2. Works with a course production team:
 - a. determining appropriate technological skill domains for each project
 - b. managing the development process
 - c. ensuring a supportive and productive working environment during the project
3. Coaches individual faculty members to develop instructional and evaluation skills related to technology:
 - a. helps faculty members develop a professional development plan
 - b. facilitates professional development through the project
4. Consults with Departments and Faculties on instructional planning and support:
 - a. consults with Departments to identify faculty support needs
 - b. co-develops a program of professional development and/or course development
 - c. assists in diagnosing implementation challenges
 - d. recommends approaches to long-term planning for innovation
5. Designs and delivers professional development activities:
 - a. determines professional development needs of community
 - b. designs appropriate strategies (seminars, workshops, institutes, and on or off-line tutorials) to meet faculty needs
 - c. models innovative approaches to continuing professional learning
6. Manages the development of instructional materials for external clients.
 - a. assesses external projects for feasibility
 - b. recommends a development process
 - c. develops a business plan
 - d. manages the project, including budgets and personnel
7. Serves on University committees and working groups
 - a. provides pedagogical expertise related to technology
8. Contributes to the field of instructional technology
 - a. evaluates effectiveness of technology-based courses
 - b. disseminates results of evaluative process through publishing, presentations at professional meetings, or through other means
 - c. models the effective use of technology in research and dissemination
 - d. provides consultative services to external associations and institutions
 - e. serves in professional associations
 - f. mentors novice instructional designers

The instructional designer must have a graduate degree in educational technology or a related field and undertake a consistent program of professional development in order to be able to recommend and model evidence-based practice in instructional design. He or she is expected to provide leadership in instructional planning, development, implementation, and evaluation. This position will be appointed for a one-year, temporary academic term, with the possibility of renewal.

An application letter, curriculum vitae and names of three persons willing to provide references should be sent to: Dr. Katy Campbell, acting director, Academic Technologies for Learning, University

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Submission deadline: April 30, 2001 (or until a suitable candidate is appointed).

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS CO-ORDINATOR

University of Alberta International (UAI) plays a pivotal role in the international activities of the University of Alberta. UAI works with students and faculties in pursuing innovative learning, research and collaborative opportunities which include assisting students in meeting their international goals, building academic partnerships and engaging in programs with industries, governments and funding agencies.

A challenging opportunity exists for a highly motivated and enthusiastic individual to join our team of professionals as communications co-ordinator. Reporting to the executive officer, the communications co-ordinator will ensure the effective internal and external communications of UAI. The co-ordinator provides direct support and strategic advice to the office of the associate vice-president (International), to UAI and to the larger campus community.

Responsibilities include:

- Leading the internal and external communications of UAI including identification of communication needs and creation, implementation, and evaluation of UAI communication plans and strategies.
- Providing strategic advice to the associate vice-president (International), UAI directors and co-ordinators related to communication of UAI activities and programs.
- Ensuring consistency of messages and images across five diverse program units within UAI.
- Acting as an internal staff resource for information and advice on communications, public image, promotions and desktop publishing.
- Providing guidance and input to other campus offices to ensure the university's international initiatives are represented in an integrated, well-informed manner.
- Understanding strategic issues with relation to internationalization and participating in issue management related to internationalization on campus.
- Representing UAI on university and other external committees.
- Co-ordinating media relations to ensure appropriate media coverage of UAI events.
- Researching and writing briefing and/or speaking notes for the AVP (International), including preparation of formal presentations.

- Supervising web-site development and maintenance for UAI.

Applicants must have post-secondary education in communications, public relations or related discipline supplemented with related practical experience. This position will be of interest to individuals who possess excellent organizational, analytical and communication skills and have an ability to work independently and as part of a team. Experience in cross-cultural settings is an asset. Candidates should have strong computer skills, particularly in desktop publishing, word-processing and presentation software.

This full-time Administrative/Professional Officer position has a salary range of \$36,000 to \$58,000 per annum commensurate with qualifications and experience. Appointment will be for a one-year term with extension subject to performance and funding availability.

Letters of interest, including a resume and names of three professional references should be submitted no later than Wednesday, April 18th to Marjorie Cayford, Executive Officer, University of Alberta International, 1204 College Plaza, 8215 - 112 Street, Edmonton, Alberta, T6G 2C8. Fax: 780-492-1488. E-mail: marj.cayford@ualberta.ca. Applicants are thanked in advance for their interest, however only those candidates selected for an interview will be contacted. Interviews will be conducted between April 30 and May 2, 2001.

The University of Alberta hires on the basis of merit. We are committed to the principle of equity in employment. We welcome diversity and encourage applications from all qualified women and men, including persons with disabilities, members of visible minorities and Aboriginal persons.

The records arising from this competition will be managed in accordance with provisions of the Alberta Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPPA).

DIRECTOR NON-ACADEMIC STAFF ADMINISTRATION

The University of Alberta is seeking applications for the position of director, non-academic staff administration. Reporting to the associate vice president (human resources) the director, non-academic staff administration is accountable for ensuring the university's capability to attract and retain high quality staff and for the creation of terms and conditions of employment for non-academic staff, which allow them to be fully engaged in the accomplishment of the university's vision of excellence.

The successful candidate will provide leadership to the employee relations, employment services, position evaluation and administrative services and information systems functions as they relate to non-academic staff and will ensure that the delivery of these essential human resource services occurs in a co-ordinated, responsive, seamless and effective manner across the campus.

The director is accountable for the maintenance of a healthy, positive and effective relationship between the University of Alberta and the Non-Academic Staff Association, the bargaining unit for the 5,500 non-academic staff who support the university's mission of teaching, research and service excellence. He or she takes a pro-active approach to the management of unhealthy conflict within the university community thereby maintaining a focus on staff creativity, productivity, and work satisfaction.

As a member of the university's human resource management team the director, non-academic staff administration will contribute to the development of human resource policies and practices respecting both academic and non-academic staff which are informed by and consistent with the university's strategic goals.

The ideal candidate will have an under-graduate degree in business or industrial relations accompanied by experience in labour relations, alternative dispute resolution, recruitment and compensation. He or she will be experienced in and committed to interest-based approaches to collective bargaining and labour relations, will have a demonstrated aptitude for finding the win-win solution, and a commitment to acting with integrity. Excellent leadership, communication, facilitation and negotiation skills are essential, as is work experience in a complex, multi-faceted and highly decentralized work environment. The successful candidate will model the very best of human resource management practices in their leadership, organization and operation of non-academic staff administration.

This is a continuing Administrative Professional Officer position with a 2000 - 2001 salary range of \$59,133 through \$93,629. The University of Alberta offers a comprehensive benefits package.

Candidates are encouraged to submit a resume no later than May 4 2001 to: Laraine Whitmore, Human Resources, University of Alberta, 2-10 University Hall, Edmonton, Alberta T6G 2J9. Tel: (780) 492-1918, Fax: (780) 492-9671 or e-mail: laraine.whitmore@ualberta.ca

DIRECTOR ACADEMIC STAFF ADMINISTRATION

The University of Alberta is seeking applications for the position of director, academic staff administration. Reporting to the associate vice president (human resources) and enjoying a functional report-

ing relationship to the vice president (academic) and provost, the director, academic staff administration is accountable for ensuring the university's capability to attract and retain high quality academic staff and for the creation of terms and conditions of employment for academic staff, which allow them to be fully engaged in the accomplishment of the University's vision of excellence.

The successful candidate will provide leadership to the academic administration unit and will ensure that the delivery of essential human resource services for staff and administration occurs in a co-ordinated, responsive, seamless and effective manner across the campus.

The director is accountable for the maintenance of a healthy, positive and effective relationship between the University of Alberta and the Association of Academic Staff: University of Alberta (AAS:UA), the bargaining unit for the academic staff who carry on the University's mission of teaching, research and service excellence. He or she takes a pro-active approach to the management of unhealthy conflict within the University community thereby maintaining a focus on staff creativity, productivity, and work satisfaction.

As a member of the university's human resource management team the director, academic staff administration will contribute to the development of human resource policies and practices respecting both academic and non-academic staff which are informed by and consistent with the university's strategic goals.

The ideal candidate will have an under graduate degree in business or industrial relations accompanied by experience in academic labour relations, alternative dispute resolution, recruitment and compensation. He or she will be experienced in and committed to interest based approaches to collective bargaining and labour relations, will have a demonstrated aptitude for finding the win-win solution, and a commitment to acting with integrity. Excellent leadership, communication, facilitation and negotiation skills are essential as is work previous experience in a higher education setting. The successful candidate will model the very best of human resource management practices in their leadership, organization and operation of the academic staff administration unit.

This is a continuing Administrative Professional Officer position with a 2000 - 2001 salary range of \$59,133 through \$93,629. The University of Alberta offers a comprehensive benefits package.

Candidates are encouraged to submit a resume no later than May 4, 2001 to: Laraine Whitmore, Human Resources, University of Alberta, 2-10 University Hall, Edmonton, Alberta T6G 2J9. Tel: (780) 492-1918, Fax: (780) 492-9671 or e-mail: laraine.whitmore@ualberta.ca

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Blooming in Bhutan

In Bhutan, the people are like the flowers: isolated and magnificent

By Ryan Smith

Detail from *Arisaema eroboscens*.

The average Himalayan valley in Bhutan is so steep, deep and isolated that, through the millennia, the seeds of many flora species have been unable to scale the soaring peaks and migrate to adjoining valleys. "This means there are endemic species in each valley," said Dr. Andreas Käre Hellum.

In some respects, the people of Bhutan are similar to the flora species found there: both remain somewhat unnoticed (and undisturbed) by the world beyond its borders.

Hellum is one of the few Westerners to have witnessed the pristine beauty of Bhutan, which is nestled among India, China and the scarcely-heard-of country of Sikkim. The former professor of silviculture and current professor emeritus at the University of Alberta went to Bhutan by invitation as a forestry consultant in

1988 for two years. On his weekdays there, Hellum worked to organize a Bhutanese foundation for forestry research. He spent his weekends painting species of the local flora, of which many had never been seen outside of Bhutan.

"The flora in Bhutan is incredibly diverse," Hellum said. "It ranges from tropical in the South to alpine in the Himalayan ram-parts in the North."

Hellum's paintings, along with his written diary of anecdotes and observations, have produced *A Painter's Year in the Forests of Bhutan*, a recent release from the University of Alberta Press.

"This book is not about the art, science, or business of forestry; it is about a forester and his relationships with people,

young and old, in Bhutan...It is a tribute to the natural history, people and religion of this remote and beautiful country," U of A professor of forest fire science Dr.

Paul Woodard writes in a review of *A Painter's Year in the Forests of Bhutan* to appear in the *Journal of Forestry* this summer.

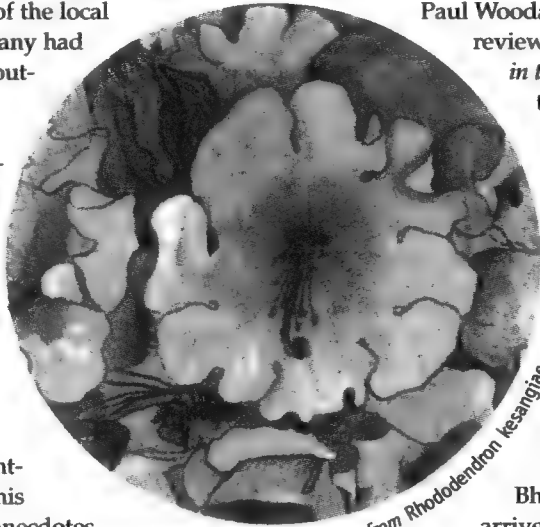
For Hellum, getting his thoughts and drawings published after more than 10 years was a small hurdle compared to some he faced in Bhutan. "Soon after I arrived, I realized there is no word for the English word 'research' in Dzongkha [the native language of Bhutan], so I quickly found out the people I was to work with had no idea why I was there...They eventually made up a word for [research], but I was never able to learn what it was."

"When I talked about setting up a research forestry organization and making five- and 10-year long-term plans, they looked at me like I was crazy. They don't make long-term plans in Bhutan; they might make plans for 14 days or three weeks in advance, but only if they were based on the moon, the stars and the weather and such things," Hellum said.

His cultural expectations were often "shattered" in Bhutan, but this greatly pleased Hellum. "In our society and culture we are bombarded with noise, pressure and advertising. Our space is constantly being invaded and nobody really sits down and listens. I found silence, and silence allows for a regenerative process, an opportunity to really listen to ourselves and dream," he said.

Since he left Bhutan in 1990, Hellum has worked as a forestry consultant in other locales around the world and has published books about the flora of Guyana and Thailand. The father of three currently lives with his wife in Edmonton and works as a translator of Norwegian, the language of his native country. He has not returned to Bhutan since he left, though he would dearly like to.

"It's extremely difficult to get a permit to go there unless you're invited," he



Detail from *Rhododendron kesangiae*.



Detail from *Euphorbia griffithii*.

said. "And if you're lucky enough to get one, it costs between \$200 and \$300 US a day — they really try to protect their culture from outside influences, and I don't blame them one bit."

In hopes of getting a return invitation, Hellum has sent a copy of his book to the King of Bhutan. "I doubt I'll ever hear anything back," he said. "They don't normally communicate well with the outside world."

However, if Hellum felt frustration with the Bhutan people and their way of doing some things, those feelings are linked closely to his love for them. "I've dedicated my book to the people of Bhutan because they were always relaxed and reaching out to me...I have a great sense of thankfulness to them, they made my experience absolutely rich and unique."



Detail from *Iris clarkei*.

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page**



The PeopleSoft Saga

by Rod Ziegler

PeopleSoft. Say it out loud on the University of Alberta campus and the seismograph starts to record tremors. The U of A's involvement with the software began in 1994, when PeopleSoft was selected as the software of choice for finance and human resources departments. The university's effort to overhaul its computer systems, and the way almost everyone on campus performs their jobs, has been the subject of bitter debate—whispered and shouted—and the cause of tremendous frustration.

This is the story of the university's Administrative Systems Renewal Program—and the way that program shook the university to its foundations.

During the mid-1990s, the university's computer systems were struggling to cope. Some programs had been written in computer languages that predated COBOL—languages that no one still on staff was able to modify. There was no single solution because systems to handle student records, human resources and financial systems catered to the needs and wants of faculties and departments, rather than to a central system. "Functioning in separate silos, they valued operating stability, resulting in unfortunate rigidities and limited cross-functional collaboration," former vice-president (finance and administration) Glenn Harris wrote, in an August, 2000 review of the finance and administration portfolio. In some cases, he noted, central service units were "administering a patchwork of clumsy processes within a poorly-designed policy and procedural framework." The decentralized approach resulted in "considerable variation in local practice and capability," Harris said. Translation: everyone had their own way of doing things. To suggest there was but one 'right' way, was to tread upon well-defined turf.

The aftershocks of budget cuts that began in 1987 complicated matters during the late '90s. The university gave priority to teaching, while administration faced a 20 per cent reduction in support staff across campus. Still suffering the effects of those cuts, staff faced a boom of sorts during the '90s. The university saw massive capital expansion and huge infusions of research dollars roll in. Competition for faculty created the need for up-to-date value-for-money accounting systems and reporting procedures. Fewer staff faced greater demands and a rapidly-changing environment. Throw in the Administrative Systems Renewal Program and you get more upheaval, says Doug O'wram, vice-president (academic). "It's not surprising there were issues," he said.

But information systems needed an overhaul. In 1996

an operational review by Ernst and Young and an administrative systems renewal review by IBM outlined major shortcomings. The problem was an unwieldy, poorly integrated and unreliable management system designed in the '70s. Having put \$7 million on the line for software and implementation in late 1994, the board of governors approved another \$1.5 million to have Ernst and Young develop a management plan. This took shape in 1997, as the ASRP. The program's implementation team faced a staggering task: roll out three new administrative systems to operate student administration, human resources and financials. Later that year, problems emerged and the team was restructured. It was clear the university was prepared to change its software but the enormity of the job, combined with the required shift in management culture, represented a daunting challenge.

Installing the new systems was the easy part. In lock-step, you had to transfer data from the old to the new systems, adapt the systems (with software rewrites) to meet the needs of different departments and faculties. And you had to train staff on brand-new systems that were described in some circles as user hostile. Getting the systems to work took time; users lost confidence in the software and the process.

But nothing changed the cold hard fact that finance, human resources and student administration systems needed upgrading.

"If you wanted software that would handle all three functions, there were only two choices," said Al O'Brien, acting vice-president (finance and administration). One option was SAP and the other was PeopleSoft; the rest is history. Costs ratcheted up. The board approved another \$10 million for ASRP implementation in 1998, amidst mounting criticism. As if on cue, the issue of Y2K compliance arose. "If you had all the facts now, would the basic decision have been different?" O'Brien asks. It seems unlikely. "My understanding is that the university did not have the in-house ability to design new systems or upgrade (the old system)."

There came a point when hard decisions were needed. Those decisions weren't wildly popular. "Half the problem was the software and half the problem was widely different perspectives," said Don Cummings, author of the highly critical Ernst and Young report.

He left the company in 1998 to start his own firm, TurnKey Consulting. Today, TurnKey and IBM/PSC hold the development and production contract for the programs, now known as Administrative Information Systems. TurnKey/IBM's work is progressing. That involves building a decision-making structure, improving the production environment and completing system upgrades. The finance upgrade is complete. Human resources and student administration upgrades got under way Feb. 15. But critics wonder if the process has been worth the tears or the money. The bill now stands at \$35 million if all expenses prior to the establishment of ASRP and transitional costs are included.

O'Brien knows a thing or two about PeopleSoft. As one of the most important figures in the provincial treasury department for the past 35 years, he recently oversaw the implementation of PeopleSoft in the provincial treasury offices. Appointed to an 18-month term as acting vice-president (finance and administration) last November, O'Brien is making PeopleSoft his top priority. He says the kindest assessment of the situation may be that the university wasn't ready for the software and the software wasn't ready for the university. Suppliers overpromised. The change-man-

agement process did not work, at least not quickly enough: it's almost impossible to impose across-the-board changes on a large bureaucracy where there are as many ways of doing things as there are faculties and departments.

The last seven years have been tough. But the understanding and tolerance on campus "have been remarkable," O'Brien said.

"The efforts of people to keep the system going in a difficult environment have been amazing. Some folks have burnt out. Some folks have quit in disgust. But I see optimism that we can make significant improvements."

O'Brien has definite goals for 2001. "I want to get people feeling they understand what is happening and why," he said. "I want interim solutions—acceptable reporting on research fund accounting."

And he wants to reduce the number of modifications written into PeopleSoft programs, so everyone is moving in the same direction and the university can see the full benefits of the software. "Although we'll never get to an absolutely 'plain vanilla' version of PeopleSoft—one size will never fit all—we have to remove some of the hundreds of customizations of the software," he said.

"The efforts of people to keep the system going in a difficult environment has been amazing. Some folks have burnt out. Some folks have quit in disgust. But I see optimism that we can make significant improvements." – Al O'Brien, acting vice-president (finance and administration)



A Light at the End of the Tunnel...

by Andrew Leitch

Some university administrators had assured us we were turning the corner—that the long-standing problems with PeopleSoft were lessening. But you don't have to go far to find someone willing to argue the point. While researching this feature, *Folio* made lots of calls. Some were never returned. Some interviews were quickly terminated. Some people wouldn't say much and others couldn't seem to stop once they got started. Everyone has an opinion on the university's Administrative Information Systems. We talked to people all across campus: administrators, users, managers, consultants. We heard a lot, good and bad.

It may be true that the university is turning a corner, but it's like turning the corner at the Cape of Good Hope. It's rough out there, and the crew is sick and tired. They've worked too hard to jump ship now and calmer seas might indeed be, well, just around the corner.

Here is how Mary Delane, an assistant dean in the Faculty of Arts, puts it: "The bad taste in everyone's mouth is beginning to wash away. There's still a range of attitudes, from skeptical to committed. But, as usual, I think the people who want to make it work, will."

Three modules

PeopleSoft software at the University of Alberta is divided into three modules: PISCES, which handles human resource information management; OASIS, which handles student administration; and EPIC, which handles financial information.

The three modules are designed to work together. For example, a student—registered with OASIS—might work part time in a research project which is tracked through EPIC, and be paid through PISCES in Human Resources.

OASIS

The launch of OASIS in 1995 was, in the words of one senior manager, a "wrenching experience." But difficulties have been largely transparent to students. "We know our business well and we have a strong motivation not to translate our problems to students," explains Registrar Brian Silzer.

The Office of the Registrar's responsibilities include student admissions, fees, transcripts, scheduling, and student records. It is here that credits are calculated, and convocation degrees are printed. It is linked to faculties through OASIS. The program's promise was to replace and improve an older, failing system.

OASIS has not yet lived up to its expectations. In fact, it's slower than the system it replaced. Silzer acknowledges it has affected students. For one thing, the university has been slower to respond to eligible students and may have lost out on some good applicants. As well, snags with fees have meant inconvenience for some.

Most of the grief, however, happened inside the office. Staff have lost track of how much overtime they've put in. The backlog of files remains constant. The learning curve is steep and staff turnover means more newcomers who need to be trained.

Erika Chomitsch is a records supervisor who witnessed the entire PeopleSoft implementation. She has reservations about OASIS, but says things are better than they were 18 months ago. "That was the worst time. We were still using the old system while learning the new one. It was very stressful. Our workload didn't diminish; we still had to serve the same numbers of students." To make matters worse, she says, her office lost 27 people in nine months. Contrary to rumour, however, they didn't drop like flies.

"A few got promoted and a lot went to work in the faculties or took other positions at the university. A couple joined the consultant."

Another staff member in the office describes the situa-

tion bluntly: "Sure we're better off than we were last year. Last year we were on our knees."

Staffing has stabilized, in part because of people like Tom Hidson. He worked in the office for a couple of summers then joined full time in January. "I think you could say we're turning the corner," he says. "We spent a lot of time learning the system and adjusting to the changes. Now I think we've moved more to refining the system." Still, OASIS isn't perfect, he says. "You need to scroll from screen to screen to get what you're looking for. It can be frustrating."

Chomitsch agrees. "You never clean up your desk," she says. "You can never sit back and say you're caught up. But we'll make it. We'll do it."

Silzer praises his staff. "These are special people," he says. "It took monumental commitment, overtime and a heroic effort" to get through implementation.

Silzer is optimistic about the next upgrade. "None of the improvements give you instant gratification," he says. "But we're getting better; we're connecting the dots."

He's most excited about Web integration that will become available with the upgrade to version 7.6, which is already underway. "I can't wait to deliver that. People will understand why it was worth the investment. You'll have clients doing some of the work . . . they'll have more control. We will really have turned the corner when students are using the Web. We are getting there. We're not there yet, but we're under no illusions. Now, we don't have the same sense of disillusionment."

EPIC

EPIC is used for financial information—everything from ordering pencils to buying vehicles to tracking funding sources. It was installed with the fewest number of enhancements and has challenged decades-old business practices. The home of EPIC is finance, under Nazim Merali, associate vice-president (finance). The main issues with EPIC

folio

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Folio's mandate is to serve as a credible news source for the University community by communicating accurate and timely information about issues, programs, people and events and by serving as a forum for discussion and debate. *Folio* is published 21 times per year.

Inquiries

Comments and letters should be directed to Richard Cairney, editor, 492-0439, richard.cairney@ualberta.ca

www.ualberta.ca/folio

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

MAY 1994

PeopleSoft selected as application software for finance and human resources. Banner for student administration, Viking for External Affairs. Project team established.

DECEMBER 1994

Board approves \$6.9 million expenditure for software and associated implementation needs.

MAY 1996

University contracts IBM to perform a project review of the three administrative projects; and contracts Ernst and Young to develop a project management plan to implement the systems.

FEBRUARY 1997

Board of Governors approves \$1.5 million purchase of software.

MARCH 1997

Project management office established, reports to Computer Network Services. Administrative Systems Renewal Program formed to oversee implementation of new software systems for student administration, human resources and finance.

relate to the perception of "downloading" responsibility onto others outside finance, and problems with extracting information from the database. Dr. John Spence, a professor in the Department of Biological Sciences, is critical of new requirements of researchers: "Central administration appears to have downloaded most of the real work for maintaining data onto local departmental researchers and trust holders," he says. "This costs me much more time and effort than it used to."

Merali won't claim EPIC is perfect, but disagrees with the term 'downloading.' "There is a fine line between enabling and empowering, and downloading," he says. "This is a matter of perspective. Access to information is an important issue to some faculties and departments. For them this is an added tool to help them do their job."

Dr. Spence's biggest concern is getting information out of the system. "We are miles, I mean miles, from where we used to be in terms of providing useable information about the state of research grants to grant holders."

Merali agrees reporting is a huge problem, and so does his boss, Al O'Brien, acting vice-president (finance and administration). Following his appointment late last year, O'Brien wrote a message to his staff about reports being generated for researchers such as Dr. Spence. "I have no doubt that these coded communiqués are perfectly intelligible to financial officers involved in transaction processing, but to the extent they are meant to convey information to trust holders, we need to find more transparent language to convey our message," the memo said. O'Brien's office has put the highest priority on its so-called Information Access Strategy to meet the needs of people like Dr. Spence. When the fixes are put into place, researchers will have greater control of funds.

More improvements are necessary. Joan Wigmore, who works in the University International Office, says PeopleSoft has made her job more difficult. But she's adapting to EPIC and growing more optimistic. "I was pulling my hair out for the first year," says Wigmore. "Now I'm okay. Not until you sit down and actually use the system do you actually learn it."

Kelly McGuirk Petryk, an administrator at the Population Research Lab, agrees things are improving. "If you enter the data properly, it's usually easy to deal with problems yourself," she says.

McGuirk Petryk says PeopleSoft has sparked some improvements. Her lab charges clients for services and the university takes a percentage to cover overhead. EPIC now deducts that money automatically from the account, providing a clearer picture of the lab's financial situation.

Now the need to train staff *en masse* is lessening and users benefit from increased one-on-one contact with members of the central units. The pool of expertise has grown all across campus.

Merali says that not enough of the successes have been shared. He cites the corporate card issued to certain staff who use it to make purchases against their budgets. "It used to be we had to manage the heck out of people but now we're giving them the tools and accountability to do their jobs."

Merali points out that the existing financial structure was designed for an institution with an annual budget an eighth the size of what the University of Alberta has grown

into. He says the way to update the structure is to introduce greater decentralization, and that means nothing less than a change of culture.

PISCES

The staff in Human Resource Information Services have had a rough time, and their troubles seem far from over. Their struggles have been the most public and their uncertainty most pronounced. HRIS produces paycheques, handles vacation pay and pensions, co-ordinates benefits and maintains job status and pay-change records. There can be up to 14,000 people on the payroll at any given time. The switch to PISCES took a toll on staff, many of whom were working 80 hours a week or more just to keep the ship afloat. During payroll runs staff were on hand 24 hours a day.

PISCES can't seem to produce an error-free cheque run, and many of the people served by HRIS—the faculty, staff and some students of the University of Alberta—lost patience long ago.

"The worst part is the embarrassment," says one member of the HRIS staff, who receives calls from people reporting errors on paycheques. "From the comments people make outside HR, people think we're complete losers."

Merali, who assumed overall responsibility for PISCES January 1, says the software has been altered so dramatically since its installation that it has become unrecognizable. The main objective of an upgrade now underway is to remove many of those customizations.

Kelly McGuirk Petryk agrees that some of the problems just won't go away. "We get a lot of errors on our paycheques and I can't say it's improving. I'm hopeful something good will come with the upgrades. I know they're trying; I know they're working their butts off. They're just not there yet."

Melanie Friesacher is a community liaison officer with HRIS. She has heard as many complaints as anyone. She describes the situation in her office as one of uncertainty.

"We know Al O'Brien has placed a high priority on straightening things out but the effects of his changes haven't really trickled down to us. We don't know much about the new upgrades and we don't know about the new structure."

She is, however, optimistic about Merali's leadership.

"Nazim called us all together and spoke to us. He answered all our questions and gave us the answers we were looking for. I'm looking forward to stability, and I think we might get it."

Merali, for his part, is blunt: "It can't get any worse," he said recently. But he, too, is optimistic. The day before his interview with *Folio*, a trio of frustrated staff from HRIS visited him in his office. "They said to me, 'Nazim, we're tired of having to hide where we work. Please help us fix it.' That gives me hope. It convinces me we have what it takes."

Part of the solution, he says, is to remove many of the customizations that made the system too complicated for anybody to use effectively. "We're going to introduce a more common sense approach," he says. "We're going to streamline the way we pay people."

But first, Merali plans to meet with his recent visitors, as well as other willing participants. "We're going to sit down and we're going to figure it out together."

Great Expectations

by Richard Cairney

The University of Alberta expected too much of PeopleSoft programs, made too many customizations to them, and some of the software itself was so unrefined there were bound to be implementation problems, a spokesman for the software firm says.

Mark Derragh, PeopleSoft's Western Canada regional director, says clients don't always balance wish lists with pragmatism. "People look at software demonstrations and say 'man, we could make toast with that if we wanted to,'" he said. "You can't go out and try to boil the ocean with this stuff." The U of A's disappointment was "fuelled by the expectation that you could match what you were doing with a home-grown system that was built by the U of A."

Programs were modified to meet the way people performed their jobs, rather than changing the way jobs are done to fit the software's requirements. "Where it got out of control, if you will, was in not limiting the customizations," he said. "And then you had a Y2K deadline looming in front of you, and project scope creeps. And you are making so many customizations to make it look like the old system that you lose sight of what you wanted in the first place."

Derragh says early student administration programs were unpolished. "You guys were pioneers," he said, referring to the university's purchase of early versions of the software. He agrees the university will never have off-the-shelf versions of PeopleSoft running but says it's important to know the impact of modifications.

The university, he adds, has a foundation to build on. When Web capabilities are made available with upgrades (some of which are underway) students, faculty, staff and even contractors can be made responsible for their own data. "If you move, you go online and access your file and change your address yourself, in a self-service way that takes transaction costs from about \$20 to have someone in Human Resources pick up the phone and do that work, to \$4."

Ultimately, the frustration and costs will be seen as worthwhile. "It is not like it was money poorly spent," he said. "We spent \$500 million rewriting our applications to work on the Net. The university couldn't do that."

Derragh hopes he'll see a day when the software blurs boundaries between institutions. He presents the notion of a province-wide student administration system, where students in transfer courses move from colleges to universities seamlessly. "It is my sincere hope that other universities and institutions look to what the University of Alberta has done and ask how much they could do as well. Is a provincial student administration system feasible? That is where I hope the province is able to take advantage of the effort the U of A has made."

JUNE 1997

Board of Governors approves expenditure of \$6.5 million for software and other implementation costs.

AUGUST 1997

Administrative Systems Renewal Program management team restructured.

MARCH 1998

Ernst and Young engaged to perform periodic audits of ASRP program.

APRIL 1998

Master implementation plan for ASRP published. Board of Governors is presented with concerns about Y2K compliance issues.

JUNE 1998

Board of Governors approves additional expenditure of \$9.8 million for implementation of ASRP.

MARCH 1999

New student registration system (OASIS) launched.

JUNE 1999

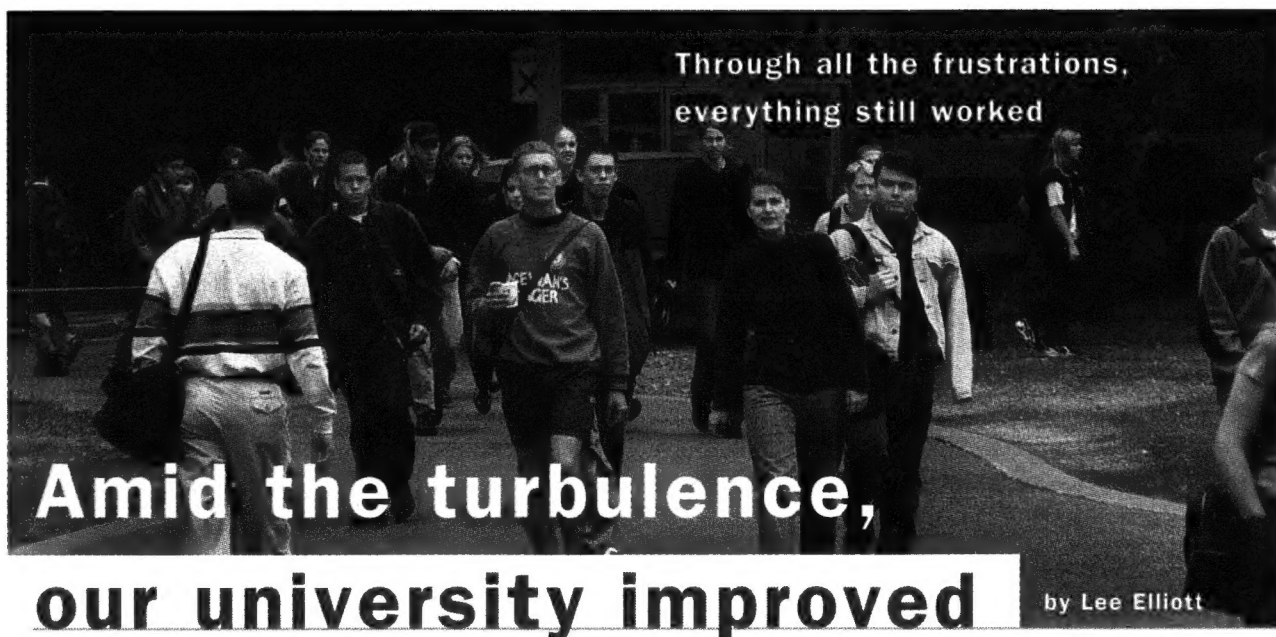
\$1.5 million in additional funds approved for completion of ASRP implementation.

MARCH 2000

University issues request for proposals to outsource production and development of administrative systems.

JULY 2000

Production and development of administrative systems (PeopleSoft) outsourced to PSC/TurnKey for five-year period. Annual budget set at \$10.2 million, through reallocation of existing funds. Upgrade on finance, to version 7.5, begins.



Through all the frustrations,
everything still worked

Amid the turbulence, our university improved

by Lee Elliott

During one of the most tumultuous times administrative support at this university has ever experienced, the University of Alberta became a better university, according to Vice-President and Provost Doug O'ram.

"Our teaching continued at an incredible pace. Our research has skyrocketed. Our profile nationally and internationally has gone up. We raised \$194 million dollars. All of these things happened while we were struggling with this system," O'ram said.

"People did a tremendous job of getting around it, or getting through it, or getting by it or – in some cases, hopefully, ignoring it."

That fact bodes well for the future, says O'ram. The future he sees is one where the vital support of administrative systems settles into the background, "no longer a point of friction for people who are trying to do their jobs." Instead,

we'll focus our full attention on research and teaching.

O'ram sees this shift being nearly complete within the next 18 months. "We'll have to go through some upgrades and other things to get there but I am actually a lot more confident now than I was even three months ago," he said. There will be bumps along the way, but the trend is an upward one toward improvement, he adds.

"The U of A joined other universities in finding both costs and the burden on staff much greater than expected," says O'ram. "The fact that we did it against Y2K made it amazing that we got through in some cases. I know it has been a real burden on staff."

As the implementation progresses, O'ram is also looking forward to a stabilization of leadership. Since PeopleSoft came to campus, the U of A has a new acting vice-president of finance and administration and changes in associate vice-presidents and directors. "I think we have moved beyond the turbulence to the point where a new stabilization is going to take place," he said. "We will begin to see the settling of the

dust." The one exception will be the vice-president, finance and administration. "Al O'Brien has indicated he is only acting and that he will be leaving in March 2002," said O'ram. "We will be hiring there."

While critics point to the lack of consistency of processes across campus as contributing to the problems we've encountered, O'ram says that lack of consistency is unlikely to go away. "We have a very decentralized and collegial system and we can't simply have someone come in and say 'you'll do it this way.' Of course that makes it harder to get to decision points and to get things done. On the other hand the differences between the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Science and the Faculty of Engineering or Medicine are so great that you can't just make one system automatic across the whole board. You have to customize. You have to adapt."

Fittingly, for an institution of higher learning, the exercise has taught us a great deal, says O'ram. "One, make sure you know the full impact before you start. This means examining the impact from the perspective of every level of the organization."

Secondly, "know the full impact of the costing in both human terms and financial terms. If anything, be pessimistic about it. Listen to the pessimists as well as the optimists."

And third, one we're unlikely to face again – "Don't do a system conversion in the face of Y2K."

O'ram says the final thing he learned through the PeopleSoft implementation is that your average administrator needs to work harder to understand highly technical projects. "I think one of the things you have to learn is to keep asking questions even if you sound stupid, even if you think you are being stupid. Just keep asking and keep asking, keep asking until you have a full picture of what is going on."

The bottom line is truly that the university managed to thrive even while going through such a difficult time, says O'ram.

"That is a testament to the people who did their jobs so well. It's also a reflection in perspective of what we do in a teaching and research institution."

We are not alone

by Richard Cairney

With about 7,000 faculty and staff and more than 30,000 students, the University of Alberta is a big campus. Introduce any campus-wide change and there are going to be headaches. The U of A can take some comfort in the fact that its frustrating experience in changing its information systems is typical. In fact, customer dissatisfaction with PeopleSoft is well documented. The U.S. firm is one of the world's largest suppliers of computer software to universities and colleges.

Just over a year ago, amid unrelenting criticism from customers, former CEO David Duffield apologized to PeopleSoft clients. During an August, 1999 conference, Duffield admitted his company's product had a bad record and vowed PeopleSoft would work to restore confidence in the software – he then resigned. Three months later, a handful of American universities wrote the company, complaining the software's performance was unacceptable.

That's a common opinion. With 3,000 staff members and some 17,000 students, the University of Waterloo felt the same kind of pains while implementing PeopleSoft programs for human resources-payroll and student administration. "Any campus who says 'we put this in and it was a breeze' is lying, or is being very misleading, especially when you're coming from a history where you have independent departments doing things their own way," said Bob Blackburn, director of applications technology at the University of Waterloo.

Some people don't even want to discuss the situation. Folio made several attempts to question the University of British Columbia about its experience but received no replies. Some dissatisfaction can be found closer to home, however, at the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology.

"Any time you get into such a large-scale implementation there are going to be challenges, and we addressed those as they came along," said David Janzen, NAIT's vice-presi-

dent (finance and administration) and leader of the institute's PeopleSoft project. "These are major undertakings. I am not minimizing the challenges."

Meeting those challenges was a marathon effort. Janzen held mandatory meetings every two weeks for 2-1/2 years. More than 20 staff and consultants would gather for progress reports and problem-solving sessions to make the institute's transition work.

Janzen said it was a matter of adapting management practices to fit the software, more than customizing the software to fit management styles.

As a result, the installation of upgrades is easier because NAIT operates in a way that accommodates the programs. The institute's human resources-payroll, finance and student administration systems are all running on PeopleSoft programs, managing a staff of about 2,000 and 14,000 full-time and trade-apprentice-ship students.

The University of Waterloo's human resources-payroll department began operating with PeopleSoft in 1998. In November, part of the student administration system moved to the software; other units within the department will make the change later this year. But just achieving that much has taken almost a decade. In 1991, the university announced a campus-wide initiative to replace aging information systems that had little or no service available. Staff thought all their problems were over.

"It was a huge process and expectations just went to the moon, and we hadn't even gone to the market yet," Blackburn recalls.

Blackburn said it's hard to pin blame on software, or to lay it on staff or a unique culture that exists in educational institutions. He understands how staff felt.

"You're jumping out of your legacy programs where you

had full control and you're now dealing with consultants you know very little about, a vendor who is fairly new in the market and a product line that is intended to be global – all of these are big yellow flags," he said.

"Go back 25 years and look at how universities were being run. If you were running the finance department, you had control of your data and that was the only way it could be done," he said. "It wasn't thought of as being 'siloed,' but as good management."

Under the new systems, departments need to work in concert with one another. "You need to know what's on the other side of the fence," said Blackburn. "You need to have your processes aligned."

Blackburn takes the hypothetical example of a grad student who is collecting a salary, has library privileges and access to other services provided by a One Card. If that student moves, Blackburn wonders, how many line-ups does he need to stand in to have his records changed: one or 30?

"If each department operated the way it has in the past and you wanted to change your address for payroll, you'd go tell human resources; if you wanted to change your address with the library, you'd go there, and if you wanted it changed with student records, you'd go to the registrar. If that information isn't available in a common directory, you haven't improved anything for the student and you're duplicating efforts," said Blackburn.

NAIT's own three-year project is starting to pay off, Janzen said.

"We've had some real gains in some areas," he said. "We've had some issues along the way in terms of meeting users needs, and we've had a very close look at that. I think we've taken a significant step forward in recent months to really improve its usefulness."

"Any campus who says 'we put this in and it was a breeze' is lying, or is being very misleading, especially when you're coming from a history where you have independent departments doing things their own way."
– Bob Blackburn, director of applications technology, University of Waterloo.